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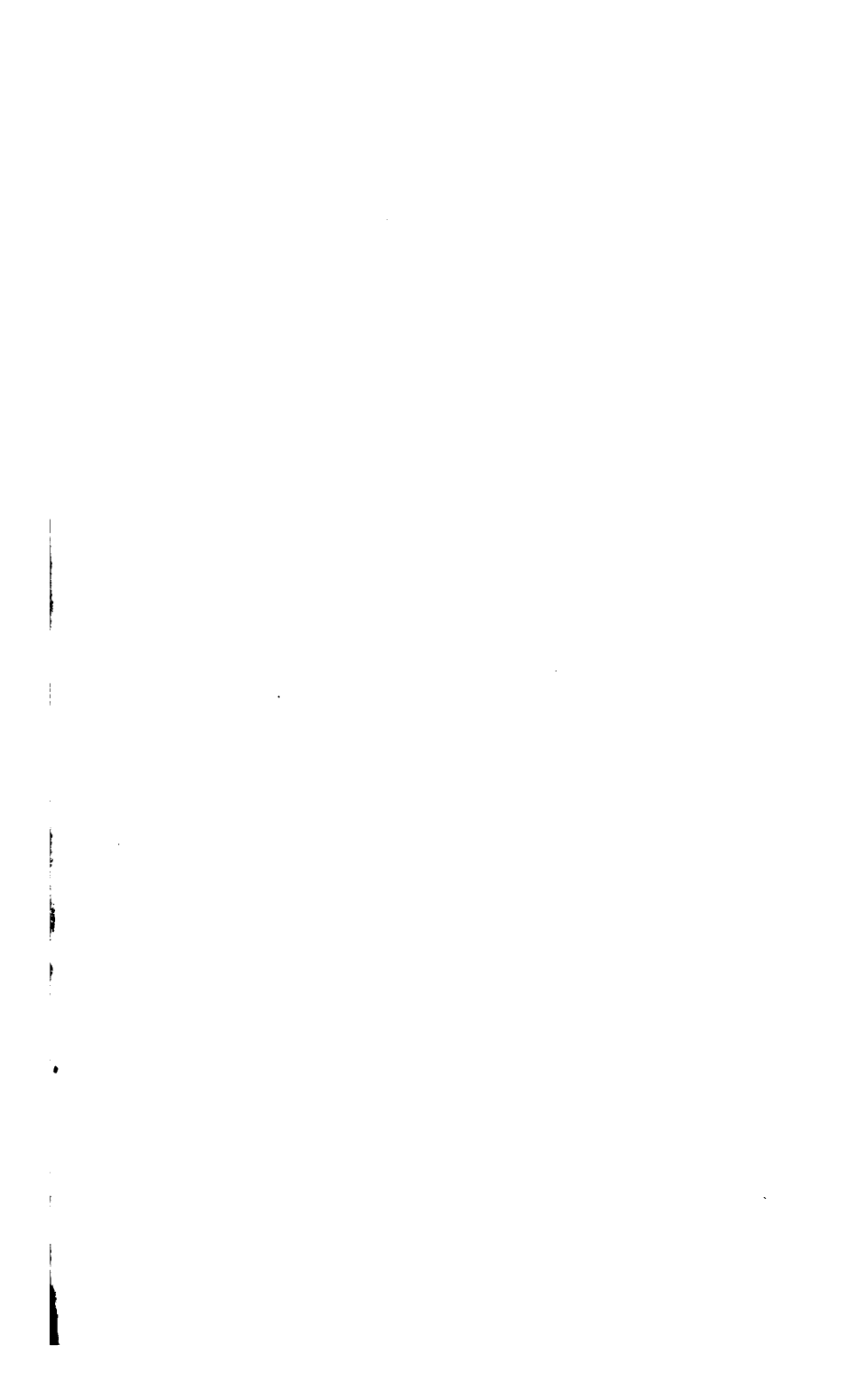


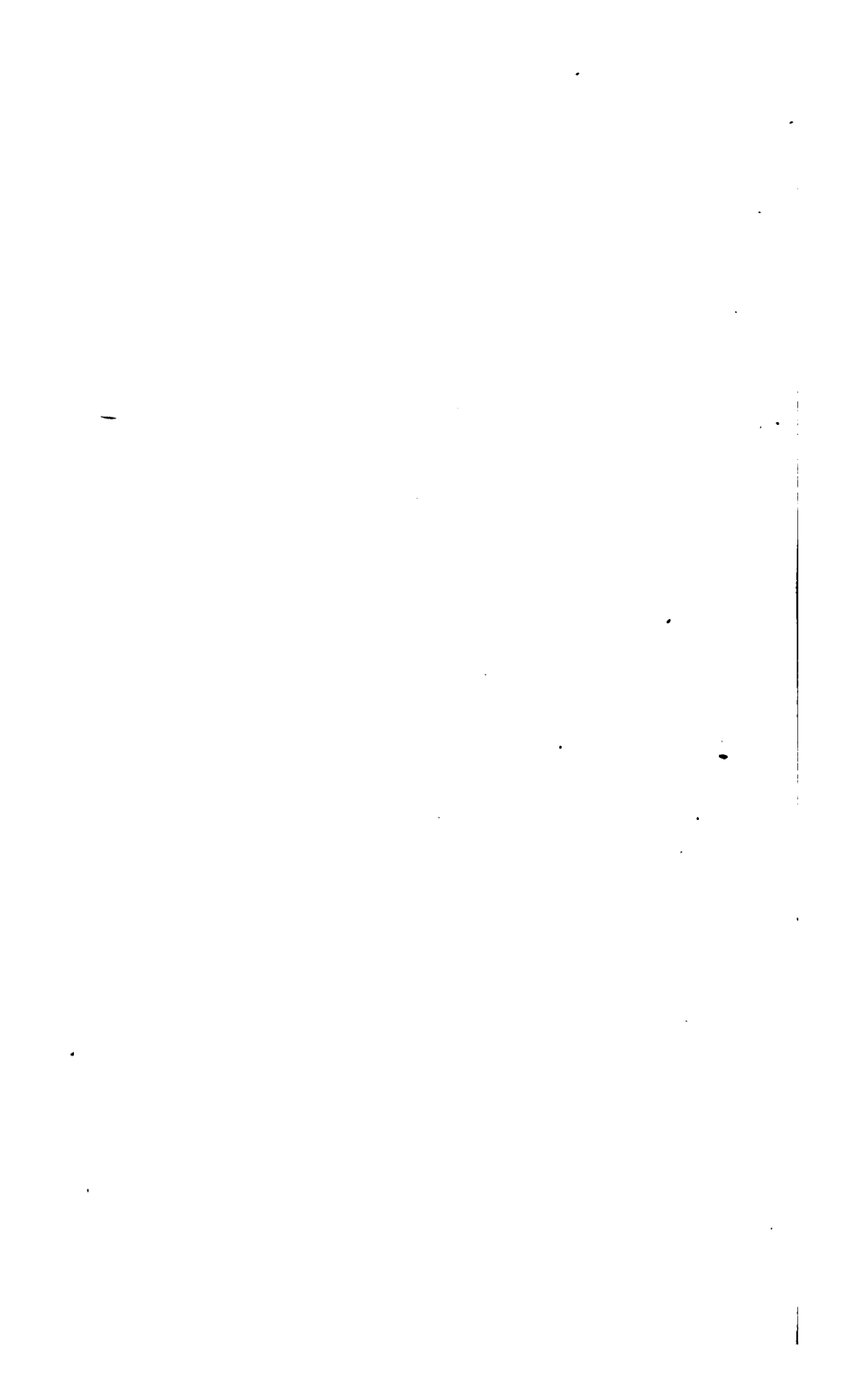
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AN

# ESSAY

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F81

ON THE

## EVILS OF POPULAR IGNORANCE.

BY JOHN FOSTER,

Author of "Essays on Decision of Character," &c. &c.

*First American Edition,*

DIVIDED INTO CHAPTERS AND SECTIONS,

WITH A

General Index to the Subjects.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG,

AND CROCKER & BREWSTER,

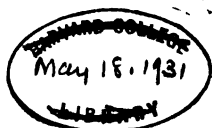
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**DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS.—To wit:**

*District Clerk's Office.*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty-eighth day of April, A. D. 1821, and in the forty-fifth year of the independence of the United States of America, SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance. By John Foster, Author of "Essays on Decision of Character," &c. &c. First American Edition, divided into chapters and sections, with a General Index to the subjects."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an act entitled, "An act supplementary to an act, intitled an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching, historical and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,

*Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*

31-177  
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## ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

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A FEW sentences in the way of explanation seem requisite to be prefixed to the following essay.

It has in a considerable degree grown out of the topics of a discourse delivered at a public meeting, assembled in promotion of the object and means of the Bristol Auxiliary British and Foreign School Society. That discourse was, in accordance with the character of the place and assembly, substantially of the nature of a religious address to a religious congregation. It was introduced by a sentence from the Bible, serving indeed rather as a motto than as a formal basis of the discourse.

When it was determined, a considerable time after the occasion, to reduce the materials of that address to a regular written form, with

a view to publication, the composition was begun in the character of a discourse addressed to an auditory, though on a scale of much greater enlargement than would consist with the proprieties of an address actually so made; and it was intended to be called, *A discourse*, the substance of which was delivered, &c. &c. or some similar title. Accordingly, the writing was carried forward to a considerable extent, (perhaps the length of eighty pages,) in some degree of conformity, in the mode of expression, to this its supposed character. But after this progress had been made, it was perceived that the course of the observations had taken such a breadth, that unless many things belonging to the subject were to be most disproportionately illustrated, or entirely omitted, the performance must be of an extent to render an adherence to the forms and character of a spoken discourse altogether absurd: they were therefore relinquished, at what was not, comparatively with the whole length of the production, a very advanced stage.

Nothing could be more impertinent than such a detail of circumstances, were it not that this mode of the origination of the essay had a

#### ADVERTISEMENT.

material influence in determining its general character, as well as some effect on the cast of the introductory portion; and that it accounts for one particular formality in the expression, retained throughout. In beginning the composition as a discourse, it was natural to adopt the common expedient of public discourses for avoiding direct egotism, by speaking in the plural number; and after the relinquishment of the original plan, there did not appear to be any such advantage to be gained by the dismissal of this formality, as to be worth the pains of altering, in what was already written, so much of the construction of the language as depended on this mode of expression.

The short sentence which had served as a text, had been repeatedly introduced, for its emphatic brevity, within the first stages of the composition; and the author thought it would be both an unnecessary and unworthy labor, to set about modifying the tenor of the writing in order to exclude it; while there is no essayist that would not be gratified to be able to give point and aggravation to his own periods, by the appropriate repetition of a vigorous phrase from an ancient classic. And besides,

the train and character of the thoughts, in the earlier part of the essay, were from the direct suggestion, and are but as an echo, of that sentence of sacred language. The retention of it in the pages, required its retention at the beginning, where accordingly it stands as a motto.

Notwithstanding a considerable modification in the introductory part, to obliterate in a degree the character of an address to an auditory, the plain traces of this will be found remaining in two or three paragraphs. It did not appear how to effect their entire removal without wholly excluding the passages; which would readily have been done, but for the apprehension of some discontinuity in the course of the thoughts.

The mode of origination, it has been observed, determined the substantial character of the essay. It was as a moral and religious subject, that the intellectual condition of the people, and its consequences, were to be exhibited. The object was, to present that view of their ignorance, in which the greatness of its mischief and calamity should most impressively appear. There are important special relations, in which the effects of the ignorance, or the



cultivation, of the people may be contemplated. Some of these are of indispensable consideration to the legislator, some to the political economist. But it is in that general view, in which ignorance in the lower orders is beheld the cause of their vice, irreligion, and consequent misery, that the subject is attempted, very imperfectly and somewhat desultorily, to be displayed in the following pages.

Nor was it within the writer's design to suggest any particular plans, regulations, or instrumental expedients, in promotion of the system of operations so hopefully begun for raising them from their degradation. His part has been to represent generally the importance of this concern, and especially to enforce the necessity of giving to their children an education truly deserving the name. In the course of doing this, occasions have been seized of exposing the absurdity, (not to attribute a less pardonable quality,) of those who are hostile to the mental improvement of the people. If any one should say that this is a mere beating of the air, for that there are scarcely any now that retain such hostility, the writer desires to compliment him on being most exceedingly candid

in his estimate of the dispositions of his fellow mortals.

It is feared the readers of the following essay will find some cause to complain of a defect of distribution and arrangement. The author has to bespeak their indulgence also, here and there, to something too like repetition. If he qualifies the terms in which this fault is acknowledged, it is because he is willing to think, that though there be a recurrence of similarities, there may not, perhaps, be many instances of downright bare iteration.

Any benevolent writer on the subject would wish he could treat it without such frequent use of the phrases, "lower orders," "subordinate classes," "inferior portion of society," and other expressions of the same kind; because they have an invidious sound, and have indeed been very often used in contempt. He can only say that he uses them with no such feeling; that they are employed simply as the most obvious terms of designation; and that he would like better to employ any less ungracious ones that did not require an affected circumlocution.

In several parts of the essay, there will be found a language of emphatic censure on that

policy of states, or in other words, that predominant spirit and system in the administration of the affairs of nations, by which the people have been abandoned to such a deplorable state of intellectual and consequently moral degradation, while resources approaching to immensity have been lavished on objects of vulgar ambition. So far from feeling that such observations can require any apology, he thinks it is high time for all the advocates of intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, to raise a protesting voice against that economy of the states denominated Christian, which has for ages found every conceivable thing necessary to be done, at all costs and hazards, rather than to enlighten, reform, and refine the people. He thinks that nothing can be a stronger sign of a mind enslaved, (if it be not rather a sign of the time-serving dishonesty which is still worse,) than that sort of doctrine which tells the philanthropist, that it is quite beside his business and out of his proper sphere, to animadvert on the course pursued by the great depositaries of power, (not meaning merely transient individual men, but systems of the administration of nations,) when he sees them not doing what he is

solemnly and with infallible truth maintaining to be the most important of all things to be done; but often or habitually doing the contrary; and with an effect which diminishes his own confined ability, and that of his co-operators, for prosecuting as individuals the momentous object.

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### ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE Publishers of this edition deem it proper to apprise the reader, that the English copy is printed in one continued discourse, or essay, without the least nominal division from beginning to end. But as this unbroken continuity is rather fatiguing to the reader; has not the proper marks for convenient reference; and can certainly add nothing to the merit of the performance,—it was considered an acceptable service, to divide the work into chapters and sections, noting the several subjects of each in a general manner. It was also thought, that it would add to the value of the book, to prepare a copious Index.

*Boston, May, 1821.*

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# ESSAY.

MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE.—Hosea.

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## CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE GENERAL CONDITION  
OF MANKIND, IN AN INTELLECTUAL RESPECT, AT  
DIFFERENT PERIODS.

### SECTION I.

*Indifference of the Human Mind to representations  
of Misery.*

It may excite in us some sense of wonder, and perhaps of self-reproach, to reflect with what a stillness and indifference of the mind we can read and repeat sentences asserting facts which are awful calamities; especially if we perceive that this repose of feeling remains undisturbed when the calamities so pronounced have all the aggravation of being of a moral and spiritual nature. And this indifference is not an extraordinary thing, the mere transient effect of occasional heaviness and languor. The self-inspector must often be compelled to acknowl-

edge it as an indication of the moral habit of his mind, that ideas of misery and destruction, though expressed in the plainest, strongest language, seem to come with but a faint glimmer on his apprehension, and die away without being able to awake one emotion of that sensibility which so many comparatively trifling causes can bring into exercise.

Will the hearers of the sentence just now repeated from the sacred book, give a moment's attention to the manner in which it impresses them? Would you find it difficult to say what idea, or whether any thing that can properly be denominated an idea at all, has been formed by the sound of words bearing so melancholy a significance? And would you be constrained to own, that they excite no interest which would not instantly give place to that of the smallest of your own concerns, suggested in the course of your thoughts, or to the tendency to wander loose among casual fancies, or to feelings of the ludicrous, if any little unlucky or whimsical incident were to happen? It is at least too probable that this is true of the majority of any numerous assemblage, even though concerns of the gravest interest be ostensibly the object of their meeting. And perhaps many of even the most serious will confess, they are mortified to find what strong repeated painful exertion it requires, to fix the mind so effectually as to move its affections to any depth, though the subjects appealing to them be unspeakably mournful.



That the "people are destroyed," is perceived to have the sound of a lamentable declaration. But the import which it languidly conveys to the mind, sinks into insignificance as received into a state of feeling which, if reducible to distinct thought would be expressed to this effect;—that the people's destruction, in whatever sense of the word, is, doubtless, a deplorable thing, but quite a customary and ordinary matter, the prevailing fact, indeed, in the general state of this world; that, in truth, they seemed to be made but to be destroyed, for that they have always been, in a variety of ways, the subjects of destruction; that, subjected in common with all living corporeal beings on earth to the doom of death, and to a fearful diversity of causes tending to inflict it, they have also appeared, through their long sad history, consigned to a spiritual and moral destruction, if that term be applicable to a condition the reverse of wisdom, goodness, and happiness; that, in short, such a sentence as that taken from the prophet, is too merely an expression of what has been always and over the whole world self-evident, to excite any particular attention or emotion.

Thus the destruction, in every sense of the word, of human creatures, is so constantly obvious, as mingled and spread throughout the whole system of things in which we are placed, that the mind has been insensibly wrought to that guarded state which we acquire in defence of our own ease, against any grievance which is

habitually present to us. The instinctive policy, with respect to this prevailing destruction, has been—not to feel. And the art of maintaining this exemption, by all the requisite devices, avoidances, and fallacies, has become almost mechanical. When fully matured, it appears like a wonderful adventitious power, added to the natural faculties of the mind,—a power of *not seeing*, (though with eyes open, and perfectly endowed with sight,) what is obviously and glaringly presented to view on all sides. There is, indeed, a dim general recognition that such things are; the hearing of a bold denial of their existence might provoke the mind in re-action to go out in intent observation to take account of them; and their reality and dreadful excess would then be asserted in emphatic terms of contradiction to that denial, their impression continuing in force as long as required for maintaining that contradiction; but, in the ordinary state of feeling, the mind preserves a comfortable dulness of perception towards the melancholy vision, and sees it as if it saw it not.

This habitual and fortified insensibility may, indeed, be sometimes broken in upon with violence, by the sudden occurrence of some particular instance of human destruction, in either import of the word, some example of peculiar aggravation, or happening under extraordinary and striking circumstances, or very near us in place or interest. An emotion is excited of pity, or terror, or horror; so strong, that if the

person has been habitually thoughtless, and has no wish to be otherwise, he fears he shall never be able to recover his state of careless ease; or, if of a more serious disposition, thinks it impossible he can ever cease to feel an awful and salutary effect. This more serious person perhaps also thinks it must be inevitable that henceforward his feelings will be more alive to the miseries of mankind. But how mighty is the power of habit against any single impressions made in contravention to it! Both the thoughtless and the more reflective man may probably find, that a comparatively short lapse of time suffices to relieve them from any thing more than slight momentary reminiscences of what had struck them with such painful force, and to restore, in regard to the general view of the acknowledged misery of the human race, nearly the accustomed tranquillity. The course of feeling bears some resemblance to a listless stream of water, which, after having been provoked into turbulence and ebullition, by a massive substance flung into it, or by its precipitation at a rapid, relapses, in the progress of a few fathoms and a few moments, into its former sluggishness of current.

But is it well that this should be the state of feeling, while a fatal process is going on under which the people are destroyed? Is there not cause to suspect some unsound principles in a tranquillity to which it makes no material difference whether the multitude be destroyed or saved? which would hardly, perhaps, have been

excited to an act of deprecation at the view of what Ornan beheld, and which might have permitted the privileged patriarch to sink in a soft slumber at the moment when the ark was felt to move from its ground. Is it possible to conceive that beings put in one place, so near together, so much alike, and under such a complication of connexions and dependences, can yet really be so insulated, as that some of them may, without any thing wrong in feeling, behold, with unmoved composure, innumerable companies of the rest in such a condition, that it had been better for them not to have existed?

To such a condition a vast multitude have been consigned by "the lack of knowledge." And we have to appeal to whatever there is of benevolence and conscience in those who deem themselves happy instances of exemption from this deplorable consignment, and who ascribe their state of inestimable privilege to knowledge, it being a consequence which has resulted, under the blessing of heaven, from information, from truth, having been communicated to their minds. Amidst the benefit and delight of what they thus possess in consequence of knowing, they might make, sometimes, the trial of how far they can go toward conceiving what their condition would be under a negation of that possession by a negation of its cause. It may, indeed, be alleged that the mind has not the power to place itself in any effectual imagination of the predicament of suffering, or having suffered, an annihilation of

its knowledge; that it cannot follow out a supposed process of putting out one bright fixed truth within it, and another, in order to conceive the state it would be in if they were extinguished. It is true that such a voluntary artificial eclipse of the light of the soul is not practicable: all that is possible in this way, is an imperfect recollection, as a matter of experience, of the ignorance which actually preceded one part, and another, of the knowledge, in the progress of its attainment: the recollection will be very imperfect in those persons especially who were well instructed in their childhood. But though you cannot perform in imagination a series of acts of *unlearning*, realizing to yourselves, throughout the retrogradation, what you would be, intellectually, at each successive extinction of a portion of knowledge, you *can* go backward along this train in the way of supposing the negation of the valuable *benefits* which have arisen to you from knowledge. Distinguishing the respective advantage accruing to you at each stage, and from each particular part, of your knowledge progressively acquired, you can so make the supposition of that advantage not having become yours, as to conceive, in some measure, in what state you would have been in the absence of it. And, while going through this process, you may consider that you are making out a representation of the condition of innumerable beings of your race.

It may be presumed of many in a numerous grave assemblage of persons, that if their attention were directed to take an account of the benefit they have received through the medium of knowledge, they might in sober truth, and the spirit of gratitude, say they do not well know where to begin the long enumeration, nor how to bring into one estimate so ample a diversity of valuable things. It might be something like being asked to specify, in brief terms, what a highly improved portion of the ground, in a tract rude and sterile if left to itself, has received from cultivation. No little time would be required to consider and recount what it has received. The fancy is carried back through a gradation of states and appearances, in which the now fertile spots, and picture-like scenes, and commodious passes, may or must have existed in the advance from the original rudeness. The estimate of what has ultimately been effected, rises at each stage in this retrospect of the progress, in which so many valuable changes and additions still required to be followed by something more, to complete the scheme of improvement. In thus tracing backward the condition of a now fair and productive place of human dwelling and subsistence, it may easily be recollected, what a vast number of the earth's inhabitants there are whose places of dwelling are in all those states of worse cultivation and commodiousness, and what multitudes leading a miserable and precarious life amidst the inhospitableness of the

waste howling wilderness. Each presented circumstance of fertility or shelter, salubrity or beauty, may be named as what is wanting to a much greater number of the occupants of the world, than enjoy such an advantage.

If, in like manner, a person richly possessed of the benefits imparted by means of knowledge, finds, in attempting to estimate the amount of good thus acquired, that the kinds and modes of it, in their variety, combinations, and gradations from less to greater, rise so fast on his view, that his computing faculty loses itself among them, he may be reminded that this account of his wealth is, in truth, that of many other men's poverty. A comparison for compassion may be made at the view of one important advantage after another, ascertained to have been from this source, and observed through their progress of enlargement, while he thinks what it would be to suffer a deprivation of all this good, or a reduction to its smallest measure, and then realizes to himself the melancholy fact, that parallel to such a state is that of the multitude in every direction.—But truly what a state that must be, if men still but very partially enlightened, and feeling themselves in all respects imperfect, and also exposed to sorrows and doomed to death, can, nevertheless, look down upon it with compassion, in consequence of what knowledge has done for them! To what a depth this implies that their fellow mortals are sunk by the “lack of knowledge.”

We may say to persons so favored,—If knowledge has been made the cause that you are beyond all comparison better qualified to make the short sojourn on this earth to the greatest advantage, think what a fatal thing that must be which condemns so many, whose lot is contemporary, and in vicinity with yours, to pass through the most precious possibilities of good unprofited, and at last to look back on life as a lost adventure. If through knowledge you have been introduced into a new and superior world of ideas and realities, and your intellectual being there brought into exercise among the highest interests, and into communication with the noblest objects, think of that state of the soul to which this better economy has no existence. If knowledge rendered efficacious has become, in your minds, the light and joy of the christian faith and hope, look at the state of those whose minds have never been cultivated to an ability to entertain the evangelical truths even as mere intellectual notions. In a word, what a state and what a calamity you deem the abandonment of human spirits to ignorance to be, when you would not for the wealth, literally, of an empire or a world, consent, were it possible, to descend into it from that to which you have been advanced by means of knowledge.

But in this state have the multitude been from the time of the Prophet, whose words we have cited, down to this hour.—Our design is to offer, without much formality of method,



a series of observations descriptive of the wretchedness, especially in a moral point of view, naturally and inseparably attending on prevailing ignorance in the people; though it might perhaps be contended that the emphatic sentence of this ancient denunciator referred rather to the punishment inflicted by Divine judicial appointment on the guilt involved in that ignorance, and on the crimes resulting from it. Exact distinctions, however, as to the mode in which the fatal consequence was connected with the cause, would be in little account with him who was deploring so sad a calamity.

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## SECTION II.

### *Disastrous Consequences of Ignorance in the Ancient Israelites.*

THE prophets had their exalted privilege of dwelling amidst the illuminations of heaven, effectually countervailed by the daily spectacle of the grossest manifestations and mischiefs of ignorance, among the very people for whose instruction they were under the prophetic vocation. One of the most striking of the characteristics by which their writings so forcibly seize the imagination, is that strange fluctuating visionary light and gloom, caused by the continual intermingling and contrast of the emanations from the Spirit of infinite wisdom, with

the disclosures from the dark debased souls of the people. We are tempted to pronounce that nation not only the most perverse, but the most unintelligent and stupid of all human tribes. The revealed law of God in the midst of them; the prophets and other organs and modes of oracular communication; religious ordinances and emblems; facts, made and expressly intended to embody truths, in long and various series; the whole system of their superhuman government, constituted as a school—all these were ineffectual to create so much just thought in their minds, as to save them from the vainest and the vilest fancies, delusions, and superstitions.

But, indeed, this very circumstance, that knowledge shown on them from Him that knows all things, may, in part, account for a stupidity that appears so peculiar and marvellous. The nature of man is in such a moral condition, that any thing is the less acceptable for coming directly from God; it being quite consistent, that the state of mind which is declared to be "enmity against him," should have a dislike to his coming so near, as to impart his communications, as it were, by his immediate act, and bearing on them the fresh and sacred impression of his hand. The supplies for man's temporal being are conveyed to him through an extended medium, through a long process of nature and art, which seems to place the great first Cause at a commodious distance; and those gifts are, on that account, more welcome, on the

whole, than if they were sent like the manna. The manna itself would not, probably, have been so soon loathed, had it been produced in what we call the regular course of nature.— And with respect to the intellectual communications which were given to constitute the light of knowledge in their souls, there can, on the same principle, be no doubt that they would more willingly have opened their minds to receive them, and exercised their faculties upon them, if they could have appeared as something originating in human wisdom, or at least as something which had been long surrendered by the Divine Revealer, to maintain itself in the world on much the same terms as the doctrines worked out from mere human speculation. But truth declared to them, and inculcated on them, through a continual immediate manifestation of the Sovereign Intelligence, had a glow of Divinity (if we may so express it) that was unspeakably offensive to their minds, which therefore receded with instinctive avoidance. They were averse to look toward that which they could not see without seeing God; and thus they were hardened in ignorance, through a re-action of human depravity against the too luminous approach of the Divine presence to give them wisdom.

But, in whatever degree the case might be thus, as to the cause, the fact is evident, that the Jewish people were not more remarkable for this state of privilege, than for the little benefit, in point of mental light, which they ac-

quired under a dispensation specially and miraculously constituted and administered for their instruction. The sacred history of which they are the subject, exhibits every mode in which the intelligent faculties may resist, evade, or pervert the truth; every way in which the decided preference for darkness may avail to defy what might have been presumed to be irresistible irradiations; every condition of ignorance which makes it be also guilt; and every form of practical mischief in which the natural tendency of ignorance is shewn. A great part of what the devout teachers of that people had to address to them, wherever they appeared among them, was in reproach of their ignorance, and in order, if possible, to dispel it.—We may, in some degree, conceive the grievous manner in which it was continually encountering them. If we should imagine one of these well instructed and benevolent teachers going into a promiscuous company of the people, in a house, or open place in a village, and asking them, with a view at once to see into their minds and inform them, say ten plain questions, relative to matters somewhat above the ordinary secular concerns of life, but essential for them to understand, it is, but making the case similar to what might happen in much later and nearer states of society, if we suppose him not to obtain from the whole company rational answers to more than three, or two, or even one, of those questions, notwithstanding that every one of them might be designedly so

framed as to admit of an easy reply from the most prominent of the dictates of the "law and the prophets," and the right application of the most memorable of the facts in the national history. In his earlier experiments he might be very reluctant to admit the fact, that so many of his countrymen, in one spot, could have been so faithfully maintaining the ascendancy of darkness in their spirits, while surrounded by divine manifestations of truth. He might be willing to suspect he had not been happy in the form of words in which his queries had been conveyed. But it may be believed that all his changes and adaptations of expression, to elicit from the contents of his auditors' understandings something fairly answering to his questions, might but complete the proof that the thing sought was not there. And while he might be looking from one to another, with regret not unmingled with indignation at an ignorance at once so unhappy and so criminal, they probably might little care, excepting some very slight feeling of mortified pride, that they were thus proved to be nearly pagans in knowledge within the immediate hearing of the oracles of God.

Or we may represent to ourselves this benevolent promoter of improvement endeavoring to instruct such a company, not in the way of interrogation, but in the ordinary manner of discourse, and that he *assumed* the existence in their minds of those principles, those points of knowledge, which would have suggested the proper replies to the questions on the former

supposition to have been put to them. You can well conceive what reception the reasonings, advices, or reproofs, proceeding on such an assumption, would find among the hearers, according to their respective temperaments. Some would be content with knowing nothing at all about the matter, which, they would perhaps say, might be, for aught they knew, something very wise; and, according to their greater or less degree of patience and sense of decorum, would wait in quiet and perhaps sleepy dullness for the end of the irksome lecture, or escape from it by slyly stealing off, or by an open and ostentatiously noisy manner of going away. To others it would all seem ridiculous absurdity, and they would readily laugh aloud if any one would begin. A few possessed of some natural shrewdness, would set themselves to catch at something in the way of cavil, with awkward aim, but good will. While perhaps one or two, of better disposition, imperfectly descrying at moments something true and important in what was said, and convinced of the friendly intention of the speaker, might feel a transient regret for what they would with honest shame call the stupidity of their own minds, accompanied with some resentment against those to whose neglect it was greatly attributable.—The teacher must have been a man very little exercised in observing looks and manner, as indications, if he did not after a while perceive that he had no effective hold on the mental faculties of the living figures before

him. And if he could have heard their talk about him and his discourse, at their evening rendezvous, he might have been compelled to pronounce himself nearly as foolish as any of them, for having so thoughtlessly assumed men's being in possession of principles which they might have learnt by serious attention during a few days, and which they were not fit to live one day without. At the same time, he would have been moved to utter the bitterest reproaches against the gross incompetence and wicked neglect in the system and office of public instruction, of which the intellectual condition of such a company of persons could not but be taken as an evidence and consequence. And in fact there is no class more conspicuous in reprobation in the solemn invectives of the prophets, than those whose special duty it was to instruct the Jewish people.

Now if such were the state of their intelligence, what would the consequences naturally be? How would this friend of truth and the people *expect* to find their piety, their morals, and their happiness, affected by such destitution of knowledge? Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? We are supposing them to be in ignorance of four parts out of five, or even a still greater proportion, of what the Supreme Wisdom was maintaining an extraordinary dispensation to declare to them. Why to declare, but because each particular in this manifestation was adapted to set and preserve something right which other means were

not competent to rectify? Consider then the case of minds to which one, and a second, and a third, and the much greater number, of the indispensable points of information thus given in Divine testimony, were wanting; of which minds, therefore, the estimates, volitions, passions, the principles of action, and the actions too, were abandoned to take, as it were, their chance for good or evil. But, if we may continue to use such a term, *had* they any chance for good in such an abandonment? From what known principal in the human nature was good to be fallen upon through an impulse that made the rational discrimination of it needless? It were truly an exceedingly probable thing that by a kind of beneficent instinct, without any determination given by knowledge, good would be found and chosen by that nature which can so often resist knowledge, conscience, and the Divine Authority combined to constrain it to such a choice! And besides, the absence of knowledge is likely to be something more and worse than simple ignorance. Even that mere negation would be sure to have its mischiefs. But the vacancy of truth would probably be found replenished with positive error. There might not, indeed, be thought enough, of any kind, for the formation of opinions or prejudices distinctly and definitely the opposites to the truths that were wanting; but such false notions as there were in the mind, however crude, and however deficient in number for constituting a full system of error, would be found sufficient to spread



their influence to all the points left unoccupied by truth. It is frightful to see what a space, in an ignorant mind, one false notion can fill, so as to be virtually the reverse of a great number of distinct truths that are wanting there, as effectually the reverse, for practical influence, as if, instead of one, this false notion were a number of distinct errors, formally standing in place of so many truths. And thus the supposed visitor for instruction would find that the ignorance of the people was not only the want of direction to good, and of defence against evil, but a positive active power of mischief.

And also, he would be made to perceive that, while the absence of right apprehensions was practically equivalent to wrong ones, that small portion of knowledge which an ignorant people might really possess could be of very little avail. For one thing, from its being most confined in its compass, and scanty in its particulars, there would be a vast number of things and occasions by which it would not, (as bearing no direct relation to them,) be called into exercise, and in which, therefore, the bad activities generated from ignorance would be left to have their unrestrained play. For another thing, a few notions conformable to truth cannot, in understandings left mainly in ignorance, and so given up, as we have seen, to error, maintain the clearness and power of truth for application even to the very things to which those notions are applicable. A mind holding but a little of truth will, commonly, hold that

require to be inseparable in knowledge. They formed to themselves a false idea of the Messiah, according to their own vain and worldly imaginations. They extended the full assurance which they justly entertained of his coming, to this false notion of what he was to be and to accomplish when he should come. From this it was natural and inevitable that when the true Messiah should come they would not recognise him, and that their hostility would be excited against a person who, while evidently the reverse of all their favorite and confident ideas of that glorious character, demanded to be acknowledged as realizing the declarations of heaven concerning it. And thus they were placed in an incomparably worse situation for receiving him when he did appear, than if they had had no knowledge at all that a Messiah was to come. For on that supposition they might have received him as a most striking moral phenomenon, with curiosity, and wonder, and as little prejudice as it is possible in any case for depravity and ignorance to feel toward sanctity and wisdom. But this delusive pre-occupation of their minds formed a direct grand cause for their rejecting Jesus Christ. And how fearful was the final consequence of *this* "lack of knowledge!" How truly, in all senses, the people were destroyed! The violent extermination at length of multitudes of them from the earth, was but as the omen and commencement of a deeper perdition. And the terrible memorial is a perpetual admoni-

tion what a curse it is *not to know*. For He by the rejection of whom these despisers devoted themselves to perish, while he looked on their great city, and wept at the doom which he beheld impending, said, *If thou hadst known*, even thou in this thy day——.

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### SECTION III.

#### *Miseries resulting from the Ignorance of Pagans.*

So much for that selected people:—we need not dwell long on the state of the whole world beside, as exemplifying the perniciousness of the want of knowledge.

The ignorance which pervaded the heathen nations, was fully equal to the utmost result that could have been calculated from all the causes contributing to thicken the mental darkness. The feeble traditional glimmering of the truth that had been originally received by Divine communication, had long since become nearly extinct, having as it were gone out in the act of lighting up certain fantastic inventions of doctrine, of which the element was exhaled from the corruptions of the human soul. In other words, the grand principles of truth, imparted by the Creator to the early inhabitants of the earth, had gradually lost their clearness and purity, and at length passed out of existence in yielding somewhat of their semblance and authority, through some slight deceptive

analogy, to the vanities of fancy and notion which sprang from the inventive depravity of man. And thus, if we except so much instruction as we may deem to have been conveyed by the extraordinary and sometimes dreadful interpositions of the Governor of the world, (and it was in but an extremely limited degree that these had actually the effect of illumination,) the human tribes were surrendered to their own understanding for all that they were to know and think. Melancholy predicament! The understanding, the intellect, the reason, (whatever name or distinction we designate it by,) which had not sufficed even for seeing the necessity of preserving the true light from heaven, was to be competent to give light in its absence. Under the disadvantage of this loss,—after the setting of the sun—it was to exercise itself on an unlimited diversity of important things, inquiring, comparing, and deciding. All those things, if examined far, extended into mystery. All genuine thinking was a hard repellent labor. The senses were feeble organs for the action of intellect on exterior existence. Casual impressions had a mighty force of perversion. The appetites and passions would infallibly, for the most part, occupy and actuate the whole man. When his imagination was put in activity, it would not be at all more favorable to the attainment of truth. His interest, according to the gross apprehension of it, would in numberless instances require, and therefore would gain, false judg-

ments for justification of the manner of pursuing it. And all this while, there was no grand standard and test to which the notions of things could be brought. If there were some spirits of larger and purer thought, that went out in the honest search of truth, they must have felt an oppression of utter hopelessness in looking round on a world of doubtful things, on no one of which they could obtain the dictate of a supreme intelligence. There was no sovereign demonstrator in communication with the earth, to tell wretched man what to think in any of a thousand questions which arose to confound him. There were, instead, impostors, magicians, vain theorists, prompted by ambition and superior native ability to abuse the credulity of their fellow mortals, which they did with such success as to become their oracles, their dictators, or even their gods. The multitude most naturally surrendered themselves to all such delusions. If it was, perhaps, possible that their feeble and degraded reason, in the absence of divine light, and but little disciplined by education, might by earnest exertion have attained to judge better, that exertion was precluded by indolence, by the immediate wants and unavoidable employments of life, by love of amusement, by subjection, even of the mind, to superiors and national institutions, and by the tendency of human individuals to fall, if we may so express it, in dead conformity and addition to the lump.

The result of all these causes, the sum of all these effects, was that unnumbered millions of living beings, whose value was in their intelligent and moral nature, were, as to that nature, in a condition analogous to what their physical existence would have been under a total and permanent eclipse of the sun. It was perpetual night in their souls, with all the phenomena incident to night. The physical economy around them presented its open and brightened aspect; there was a true light coming on them every morning in material beams from the sky; they saw one order of things aright,—that which they were soon to leave, and look back upon as a dream when one awaketh. But there was subsisting present with them, unapprehended except in faint and delusive glimpses, another order of things involving their greatest interests, with no luminary to make that apparent to them, after the race had willingly forgotten the primary instructions from their Creator.

The dreadful consequences of this "lack of knowledge," as appearing in the religion and morals of the nations, and through these affecting their welfare, equalled and even surpassed all that might in theory have been presaged from the cause.

This ignorance could not annihilate the *principle* of religion in the spirit of man, but in removing the awful repression of the idea of one exclusive sovereign Divinity, it left that spirit to form its religion in its own manner.

And as the creating of gods might be the most appropriate way of celebrating the deliverance from the most imposing idea of one Supreme Being, depraved and insane invention took this direction with ardor. The mind threw a fictitious divinity into its own phantasms, and into the objects in the visible world. It is amazing to observe how, when one solemn principle was taken away, the promiscuous numberless crowd of almost all shapes of fancy and of matter became, as it were, instinct with ambition, and mounted into gods. They were alternately the toys and the tyrants of their miserable creator. They appalled him often, and often he could make sport with them. For overawing him by their supposed power they made him a compensation by descending to a fellowship with his follies and vices. But indeed this was a condition of their creation; they *must* own their mortal progenitor by sharing his depravity, even amidst the lordly domination over him and the universe. We may safely affirm, that the mighty artificer of deifications, the corrupt soul of man, never once, in its almost infinite diversification of device in their production, struck out a form of absolute goodness. No, if there were a million of deities, there should not be one that should be authorized by perfect rectitude in itself to punish *him*; not one by which it should be possible for him to be rebuked without having a right to recriminate.

Such a pernicious creation of active delusions it was that took the place of religion in the ab-

sence of knowledge. And to this intellectual obscuratation, and this legion of pestilent fallacies, swarming like the locusts from the smoke of the bottomless pit in the vision of St. John, the fatal effect on morals and happiness corresponded. Indeed the mischief done there perhaps even exceeded the proportion of the ignorance and the false theology; according to the general rule, that any thing wrong in the mind will be the *most* wrong where it comes the nearest to its ultimate practical effect.

The people of those nations, (and the same description is applicable to modern heathens,) did not know the essential nature of perfect moral goodness, or virtue. How should they know it? A depraved mind would not find in itself any native conception to give the bright form of it. There were no living examples of it. The men who held the pre-eminence in the community were generally, in the most important points, its reverse. It was for the *Divine* nature, manifesting itself and contemplated, to have presented the archetype of the idea of perfect rectitude, whence might have been derived the modified exemplar for human virtue. And so *would* the idea of perfect moral excellence have come to dwell and shine in the understanding, if it had been the True Divinity that men beheld in their contemplations of a superior existence. But when the gods of their heaven were little better than their own evil qualities, exalted to the sky to be thence reflected back upon them invested with Olym-



pian charms and splendors, their ideas of deity would evidently co-operate with all that made it impossible for them to conceive a perfect model for human excellence. See the mighty labor of human depravity to confirm its dominion! It would translate itself to heaven, and usurp divinity, in order to come down thence with a sanction for man to be wicked,—in order, by a falsification of the qualities of the Supreme Nature, to preclude his forming the true idea of what would be perfect rectitude in his own.

A system which could thus associate all the modes of moral turpitude with the most lofty and illustrious forms of existence, would go far toward vitiating essentially the entire theory of moral good and evil. And if, in spite of all its power of subversion, any moral principles still maintained their ground in the convictions of the understanding, and there asserted their claim with a voice which nothing could silence, such a system would nevertheless greatly contribute to defraud them of practical efficacy.

But, how small was the number of pure moral principles, (if indeed any,) that among the people of the heathen nations *did* maintain themselves in the convictions of the understanding. The darkness to which the privation of the divine light had abandoned them, gave free action to all the perversities of thought and desire that went to the abrogation, in speculative acknowledgment, in judgment, of almost all the essential principles and

specific rules of the true morality. And of this melancholy privilege, the naturally rebelling temper of the mind against those principles and rules availed itself in every possible way, operating to this effect, of erasing from the understanding the just notions and traces of morality, partly by the direct means of the influence of the passions and appetites, and partly, as we have just described, by the corrupt agency more circuitously brought to bear on the same object through a falsification of religion.

And so mighty was the success of this anti-moral operation, that iniquities without number took the name and repute of virtues. It is quite tremendous to consider how large a proportion of all the vices and crimes of which mankind were ever guilty, have actually constituted, in one nation and age, and another, a part of the approved moral and religious system. It is questionable if we could select from the worst forms of depravity any one which has not been at least admitted among the authorized customs, if not even appointed among the institutes of the religion, of some tribe of the human race. And when thus sanctioned, these depravities might without restraint diffuse an infection of their quality through every thing in the social economy in which they were contained. This was as natural an effect as that which would follow from the admission, among a close assemblage of persons, of an individual who was sickening of the plague.

Wherever, therefore, in the imperfect notices afforded us of ancient nations, we find any one virulent iniquity holding an authorized place in custom or religion, we may confidently make a very large inference, even where the record is silent.

Every thing that, under the advantage of this destitution of knowledge, operated to the destruction of the true morality, both in theory and practice, must have had a fatal reinforcement of its power in that part of this ignorance which respected hereafter. The doctrine of a future existence and retribution did not, in any rational and salutary form, interfere in the adjustment of the system of life. What there was of such a notion in the minds of the pagans, was too fantastic in its conception, or too slightly held in faith, either to become itself, as from its own nature and authority, a definer and prescriber of genuine virtues, (by the rule of inference—if this is so, then such and such ought to be the conduct of the expectants,) or to give efficacy to what might have been yet retained of natural reason to discern between good and evil. Imagine, if you can, the withdrawalment of this doctrine from the minds of those whose present faith is the whole of revealed truth. Suppose the grand idea wholly obliterated, or faded to a shadowy and dubious trace of what it had been, or transmuted into a poetic dream of classic or barbarian mythology, and how many moral principles would be found to have

vanished with it. How many things which it had imposed would have ceased to be duties, or would continue such only on the strength, and in the proportion, of some very minor consideration which might remain to enforce them, perhaps in an altered and deteriorated form. If some things retained the undeniable quality of duty, by virtue of a close relation to the matter of benefit or mischief, of the most obvious and tangible kind, the sense of obligation would be destitute of all solemnity, from the abolition of all its relations to Deity, eternity, an invisible world, and a judgment to come. It would therefore have none of that emphasis of impression which can sometimes dismay and quell the opposing passions, as by a mysterious visitation from an unseen power. It would be deprived of that which forms the chief force of conscience. And it would have no strength to uphold in the higher quality of *principle*, that which would be constantly degenerating into mere policy, and rationally justifying itself in doing so.

The withdrawalment, we say, of the grand truth in question, from a man's faith, would necessarily break up the moral government over his conscience. How evident then is it, that among the people of the heathen lands, under a disastrous ignorance of this and all the sublime truths that are fit to rule an immortal being during his sojourn on earth, no man could feel any peremptory obligation to be universally virtuous, or adequate motives to excite

the endeavor to approach that high attainment, even were there not a perfect inability to form the true conception of it. How evident too it is, that the general mass would be horribly depraved. We may indeed, at times, notwithstanding the dreadfulfulness of the results easily foreseen as inevitable from such causes, be somewhat surprised at reading of some transcendent enormities; but we feel no wonder at the substance of the exhibition of such a state of those nations as the Sacred Scriptures affirm, in descriptions to which the other records of antiquity add their testimony and their ample illustrations. Let the spectacle be looked on in thought, of vast national multitudes, filled, agitated, and impelled, by the restless forces of passions and appetites. Say what measure- and what kinds of restraint there should be on such crowds, so actuated, to keep them from rushing into evil. Take off, as far as you dare, any given restraint, to see what will follow. Take off or withhold from these beings, possessed and inflamed as you see them to be,—remove from them all the coercion that could be applied in the form of just ideas of the righteous Almighty Governor; a luminous exposition of what it is for moral agents to be good, and what to be evil, with the vast importance of the difference, and the prospect of a judgment, retribution, and eternal existence. All this being removed from resting on and grasping the spirits of the innumerable assemblage, imagine them yielded

up for their passions and appetites to have the dominion, excepting so far as it shall be opposed and limited by something else than those solemn counteractions, something remaining or supplied when they are annihilated. And *what* will, for this use, so remain or be supplied? What a lamentable scene ensues, if all that will be left or be found to maintain the opposition and repression is, from within, so much innate blind preference for goodness as even such a state of things cannot destroy, and from without, that measure of resistance which all men make to one another's bad inclinations, in self-defence.

It is true, indeed, that this last does prevent an infinity of actual mischief. There is involved in the very constitution of things a principle by which a coarse self-interest prevents, under Providence, more practical evil, beyond comparison more, than all other causes together. The man inclined to perpetrate an iniquity, of the nature of a wrong to his fellow-mortals, is apprised that he shall provoke a reaction, to resist or punish him; that he shall incur as great an evil as that he is disposed to do, or greater; that either summary revenge will strike him, or a process instituted in organized society will vindictively reach his property, liberty, or life. This defensive array, of all men against all men, restrains to stop within the mind an immensity of wickedness which is there burning to come out into action. But for this, Noah's flood had been rendered needless.

But for this, our planet might have been accomplishing its circles round the sun for thousands of years past without a human inhabitant. By virtue of this great law in the constitution of things, it was possible for the race to subsist, notwithstanding all that ignorance of the Divine Being, of heavenly truth, and of uncorrupt morality, in which we are contemplating the heathen nations as benighted. But while it thus prevented utter destruction, it had no corrective operation on the depravity of the heart. It was not through a judgment of things being essentially evil that they were forborne; it was not by means of conscience that depraved propensity was kept under restraint. It was but by a hold on the meaner principles of his nature, that the offender in will was arrested in prevention of the deed. Thus the immense multitudes were, virtually as bad as they would actually have been if they had dared for fear of one another. But besides, how very partial was the effect of this restraint, even in the exterior operation to which it was confined. Men *did* dare, in contempt of this preventive defensive array, to commit a stupendous amount of crimes against one another, to say nothing of their moral self-destruction, or of that view of their depravity in which it is to be considered as against God. While there was no force of beneficent truth to invade the dreadful cavern of iniquity in the mind, and there to combat and conquer it, there would be sure to be often no want of

audacity to send it forth into action at all hazards.

Something might be said, no doubt, in behalf of what might be supposed to be done for the pagan nations by legislation, considered, not in its character of director of the coercive and retributive force in the community, but strictly in the capacity of a moral preceptor. But besides that legislators who themselves, in common with the people of their nations, looked on human existence and duty through a worse than twilight medium, who had no divine oracles to speak wisdom to them, and were, some of them, reduced to begin their operations with the lie that pretended they had,—besides that such legislators would inevitably be, in many of their principles and enactments, at variance with eternal rectitude,—besides this fatal defect, legislation bore upon it too plainly that character of self-interest, of mutual self-defence and menace, to which we have adverted, to be an efficacious teacher of morals, in any deeper sense than the prevention of a certain measure of external crime. Every one knew well that the pure approbation and love of goodness were not the source of law, but that it was an arrangement originating and deriving all its force from self-love, a contrivance by which each man was glad to make the collective strength of society his guarantee against his neighbor's presumed wish and interest to do him wrong. While happy that his neighbor was under this restraint, he was often vexed to



be under it also himself; but on the whole deemed this security worth the cost of suffering this interdict on his own inclinations, perhaps as judging it probable that his neighbor's were still much worse than his own. We repeat, that a preceptive system thus estimated would but ill instruct the judgment in the pure principles of virtue, and could not come with the weight of authority and sanctity on the conscience.—We may here observe, by the way, how evident was the necessity, that the rules and sanctions of morality, to come in simplicity and power on the human mind, should primarily emanate from a Being exalted above all implication and competition of interests with man.

Thus we see, that in the darkened economy of the heathens there was nothing to be applied, with a grand corrective restraining operation, directly and internally, to the mighty depraved energy of the passions and appetites. That was left in awful predominance in the innumerable multitude. And to the account of what this energy of feeling tending to evil would accomplish, let there be added all that could result from the co-operation of intellect. Only reflect for a moment on the extent of human genius, in its powers of invention, combination, diversification, and then think of all this faculty, in an immense number of minds, through many ages, and in every imaginable variety of situation, impelled to its utmost exertion in the service of sin, as it would of course,

and was in fact. Reflect how many ideas, available to the purpose, would spring up casually, or be suggested by circumstances, or be attained by the earnest study of beings goaded in pursuit of change and novelty. The simple modes of iniquity were put under an active ministry of art, to combine, innovate, and augment. And consequently all conceivable,—literally all conceivable forms of immorality were brought to imagination, most of them into experiment, and the greater number into prevailing practice, in those nations: insomuch that the sated monarch would have imposed nearly as difficult a task on ingenuity in calling for the invention of a new vice, as of a new pleasure. They would perhaps have been identical demands when he was the person to be pleased.

If such depravity did not, as viewed in itself and alone, appear equivalent to the gravest import of the terms, "the people are destroyed," the attendant misery instantly rushes on our sight to complete their verification. There may not be wanting a class of vain sneering mortals who receive no impression of any serious truth in the maxim that wicked nations must be miserable ones, and will say, "the state of the ancient heathens as referred to in exemplification, is a matter of most trivial interest to us, just fit to give some shew and exaggeration to a common-place. They might be wretched enough; and perhaps also the matter has been extravagantly magnified for the ser-

vice of a favorite theme, or to afford indulgence to rhetorical excess. At any rate, it is not now worth while to go so far back to trouble ourselves about it. The ancient heathens had their day and their destiny, and it is of very little importance to us what they were or suffered."—And whose compass of thought, we would ask, is evinced, whose apprehension of the higher and permanent relations of things, whose aptitude to derive admonition and wisdom from the past, whose contemplation of the divine government as one system from the beginning to the end,—if nothing can powerfully strike the mind but a thing of the present moment? There were doubtless some reckless souls that could sport in great self-complacency in view of the ruins of Jerusalem, sometime after the Roman legions had left it and its myriads of dead inhabitants to silence, and would have made light of a reference to it as an example of the consequences of the wickedness of a people; but would not exactly these have been the most likely to provoke the next avenging visitation, and to perish in it? The ancient triflers with the wretchedness and destruction of their race, who thought it but an impertinent moralizing that attempted to recal such funereal spectacles for admonition, assuredly found themselves at last to be fools. And we are convicted of exceeding stupidity, if the dreadful exhibition of the general misery of a world is felt, (when to be looked back upon through some intervening ages,) too insig-

nificant a thing to illustrate to us the very truth, to enforce on us the very instruction, which it so prominently and peculiarly offers,— we might almost say fulminates, so glaring is the fact that a condition emphatically unhappy, manifested, in those nations of old, the natural tendency of ignorance of the most important truths.

It is true that the mental darkness which we are representing as so greatly the cause of their wickedness and unhappiness, had the effect, in a measure, of protecting them from some kinds of suffering. They had not illumination enough, to have conscience enough, for inflicting the severest pains of remorse, and of “the fearful looking for of fiery indignation.” But that they were wretched was practically acknowledged in the very quality of what they ardently and universally sought as the highest felicities of existence. Those delights were violent and tumultuous, in all possible ways and degrees estranged from reflection, and adverse to it. The whole souls of great and small, in the most barbarous and in the more polished state, were passionately set upon revelry, upon expedients for inflaming the indulgences of licentiousness to extravagance, madness, and monstrous enormity; upon concourses of multitudes for pomps, celebrations, shews, games, combats; on the riots of exultation and revenge after victories. The ruder nations had, in their way, however pitiable in their attempts at magnificence, their grand festive,

triumphal, and demoniac confluxes and revelings. To these joys of tumult, the people of the savage and the more cultivated nations sacrificed every thing belonging to the peaceful economy of life, with a desperate frantic fury. And all this was the confession that there was little felicity in the heart or in the home. Nor could all this be itself happiness: even if the vain elation could be called so while it lasted, it was brief in each instance, and it subsided in an aggravated dreariness of the soul.

The fact of their being unhappy had a still more gloomy attestation in the mutual enmity which seems to have been of the very essence of life, so vital a principle that it could not be spared an hour. No, they could not live without this luxury drawn from the fountains of death! What is the most conspicuous material of ancient history, what is it that glares out the most hideously from that darkness and oblivion into which the old world has in so great a degree retired, but the incessant furies of miserable mortals against their fellow-mortals, "hateful and hating one another?" We cannot look that way, but we see the whole field covered with inflictors and sufferers, not seldom interchanging those characters. If that field widens to our view, it is still, to the utmost line to which the shade clears away, a scene of cruelty, oppression, and slavery; of the strong trampling on the weak, and the weak often attempting to bite at the feet of the strong; of rancorous animosities and murderous competitions of per-

sons raised above the mass of the community; of treacheries and massacres; and of war, between hordes, and cities, and nations, and empires, war *never*, in spirit, intermitted, and suspended sometimes in act only to acquire renewed force for destruction, or to find another assemblage of hated creatures to cut in pieces. Powerful as "the spirit of the first-born Cain" has continued, down to our own age, and in the most improved division of mankind, there was nevertheless, in the ancient pagan race, (as there is in some portions of the modern,) a more complete uncontrolled actuation of the all-killing, all-devouring fury, a more absolute possession of Moloch.

Now it is *as misery* that we are exhibiting all this depravity. To be thus *was suffering*. The corruption and the torment are inseparable in description, and they were so in reality. And both together were a natural result of being ignorant of God and all the most important truth.—A comprehensive estimate of the condition of those tribes, on a larger scale, would, we need not observe, include some minor things of less gloomy character, but not availing to change the general aspect of the picture. How emphatically then, as of the Jewish tribes when they rejected the divine illuminations, and found the consequence, it may be pronounced of the heathen nations that surrounded them, "the people were destroyed for lack of knowledge."

We might have been allowed to comprehend in the account of their miserable condition *all* the kinds of infelicity inseparable from their ignorance. We should then have recounted such topics as these: the unhappiness of being without an assurance of an all-comprehending and merciful Providence, and of wanting therefore the best support in sorrow and calamity; the uncontrollable impatience, or the deep melancholy, with which the more thoughtful persons must have seen departing from life, with no anticipation approaching to a defined hope of ever meeting them in a life elsewhere, the relatives or associates who were dear to them in exception to the prevailing selfishness and hostility; and the gloomy and perhaps sometimes alarmed sentiment, with which they must have thought of their own continual approach toward death. But, as the sentence we adopted, to introduce these observations, evidently implies the people's *iniquity* while pronouncing that they are destroyed, we have wished to give the prominence, in the representation, to the misery which they suffered by necessary result, or rather in the very fact, of their being wicked, and wicked in natural consequences of being estranged from the knowledge of the true religion and the divinely authorized morality.

We shall not, we trust, incur the imputation of such an absurdity as to imagine, that had that knowledge prevailed among them, to the extent of being present in all their minds, there could then have been scarcely any thing of this

wickedness and misery: these evils have a deeper source than even ignorance. But it would be no less an absurdity to deny, that something of the highest importance toward the desired practical end is accomplished, if it is made sure that the dictates and impulses of a corrupt will shall be encountered, like Balaam by the angel, by a clear manifestation of their bad and ruinous tendency, by a convinced judgment, a protesting conscience, and the aspect of the Almighty Judge,—instead of their being under the tolerance of a judgment not instructed to condemn them, or, (as ignorance is sure to quicken into error,) perverted to reinforce them by its sanction.

Having thus shewn, at greater length than was first intended, how the ancient state of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, verified the expression of the Prophet, we shall glance rapidly over the long subsequent periods; and come down to our own times. In doing so, however, we need not take further account of Jews or Heathens. Nor shall we do more than just name the Mahomedan imposture, though that is, perhaps, the most signal instance in the world and all time, of a malignant delusion maintained directly and immediately by ignorance, by a solemn determination and even a fanatic zeal not to receive one new idea. This execrable delusion is so strong and absolute in ignorance, is so identified with it, and so systematically repels at all points the approach of knowledge, that it is difficult to conceive a



mode of its extermination that shall not involve some fearful destruction, in the most literal sense, of the people. And such a catastrophe it is probable the great body of them, in this temper of mind prevailing among them at the hour, would choose to incur by preference, we do not say to a serious patient consideration of the true religion, but even to the admission among them of a system merely favoring knowledge in general, an order of measures which should urge upon the adults, and peremptorily enforce for the children, a discipline of intellectual improvement. There would be little national hesitation of choice, (at least in the central regions of the dominion of this hateful imposture,) between the introduction of any general system of expedients for driving them from their stupefaction into something like thinking and learning, and a general plague, to rage as long as any remained for victims.

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Awful Abominations directly flowing from the Ignorance and Errors of Popery.*

BUT let us now look a moment at the intellectual state of the people denominated Christian, during the long course of ages preceding the Reformation. The acquisition made by earth from heaven, of Christianity, might have seemed to bring with it an inevitable necessity of an im-

mense difference speedily and for permanence taking place, in regard to the competence of men's knowledge to prevent their destruction. It was as if, in the physical system, some one production, far more salutary to life than all the other things furnished from the elements, had been reserved by the Creator to spring up in a later age, after many generations of men had been languishing through life, and prematurely dying, from the deficient virtue of their sustenance and remedies. The image of the inestimable plant had been shewn to the prophets in their visions, but the reality was now given; its fruit had "the seed in itself," and it was for all people to cultivate it. But, while by the greater part of mankind it was not accounted worth admission to a place on their blasted desolated soil, the manner in which its virtue was frustrated among those who pretended to regard it, as it was, the best gift of the divine beneficence, is recorded in eternal reproach of the christian nations.

As the hostility of heathenism, in the direct endeavors to extirpate the christian religion, became evidently hopeless, in the realms within the Roman empire, there was a grand change of the policy of evil; and all manner of reprobate things, heathenism itself among them, rushed as by general conspiracy, into treacherous conjunction with christianity, retaining their own quality under the sanction of its name, and by a rapid process reducing it to surrender almost every thing distinctive of it but that dis-

honored name. There were indeed in existence the sacred oracles, and these could not be essentially falsified. But there was no lack of expedients and pretexts for keeping them in a great measure secreted, and a kind of reverence might be pretended in doing so. In the progress of version from their original languages, they could be stopped short in a language but little less unintelligible to the bulk of the people, in order that this "profane vulgar" might never hear the very words of God, but only such report as it should please certain men, at their discretion, to give of what he had said. But even though the people had understood the language, in the usage of social converse, there was a grand security against them in keeping them so destitute of the knowledge of letters that the Bible, if such a rare thing ever did happen to fall into any of their hands, would be no more to them than a scroll of hieroglyphics. When to this was added, the great cost of a copy of so large a book before the invention of printing, it remained perhaps just worth while, (and it would be a matter of very little difficulty or daring,) to make it, in the matured state of the system, an offence, and a sacrilegious invasion of sacerdotal privilege, to look into a Bible. If it might seem hard thus to constitute a new sin, in addition to the long list already denounced by the divine law, amends were made by indulgently rescinding some articles in that list, and qualifying the rules of obligation with respect to them all.

In this retirement and latency of the sacred authorities from all communication with men's minds, the christian world was left in possession of merely the names of the solemn realities of religion. These names, thus vacated, were available to all evil. They were as unfilled vessels of the sanctuary, into which crafty and wicked men might clandestinely introduce the most malignant preparations. And such men did improve their opportunity to the utmost. How prolific was the invention of the falsehoods and absurdities of notion, and of the vanities and corruptions of practice, which it was managed to make these names designate and sanction; while it was also managed, with no less sedulity and success, that the inventors and propagators should be held in submissive reverence by the community, as the oracular depositaries of truth. That community had not knowledge enough of any other kind, to create a resisting and defensive power against this imposition in the concern of religion. A sound exercise of reason on other subjects, a moderate degree of instruction in literature and science rightly so called, might have given some competence to question, to examine, to call for evidence, and to detect some of the fallacies imposed for christian faith. But the general mind was on all sides pressed and borne down to its fate. All reaction was subdued; and the people were reduced to exist in one huge, unintelligent, monotonous, substance, united by the interfusion of a vile superstition,

which just kept it enough mentally alive for all the uses of cheats and tyrants,—a proper subject for the dominion of “our Lord God the Pope,” as he was sometimes denominated, and might be denominated with perfect impunity, as to any excitement of revolting or indignation, in millions of beings, bearing the form of men, and the name of Christians.

Such *was*,—it is easy to conceive what *should* have been,—the condition of existence of this vast mass, which was thus assimilated and reduced into a material fit for all the bad uses, to which priestcraft could wish to put the souls and bodies of its slaves. The mighty aggregate of Christendom *should* have consisted of so many beings having each, in some degree, the independent beneficial use of his *mind*; all of them trained to the object of being made sensible of their responsibility to their Creator, for the exercise of their reason on the matters of belief and choice; all of them capacitated for improvement by being furnished with the rudiments and instrumental means of knowledge; and all having within their easy reach, in their own language, the scriptures of divine truth.

Can any doubt arise, whether there were in the christian states resources competent, if so applied, to secure to all the people an elementary instruction, and the possession of the Bible? Alas! all nations, sufficiently raised above perfect barbarism to exist as states, have in all ages consumed, in some way or other else than

they should, an infinitely greater amount of resources than would have sufficed, after comfortable physical subsistence was provided for, to afford a moderate share of instruction to all the people. And in those popish ages, that expenditure alone which went to ecclesiastical use, would have been far more than adequate to this beneficent purpose. Think of the boundless cost for supporting the magnificence and satiating the rapacity of the hierarchy, from its triple-crowned head, down through all the orders, consecrated under that head to maintain the delusion and share the spoil. Recollect the immense system of policy, for jurisdiction and intrigue, every agent of which was a consumer. Recollect the pomps and pageants, for which the general resources were to be taxed; while the general industry was injured by the interruption of useful employment, and the diversion of the people to such dissipation as their condition qualified them to indulge in. Think also of the incalculable cost of ecclesiastical structures, the temples of idolatry, as in truth they may be adjudged to have been. One of the most striking situations for a religious and reflective protestant is, that of passing some solitary hour under the lofty vault, among the superb arches and columns, of any of the most splendid of these edifices remaining at this day in our own country. If he has sensibility and taste, the magnificence, the graceful union of so many diverse inventions of art, the whole mighty creation of ge-

nus that so many centuries since quitted the world without leaving even a name, will come with magical impression on his mind, while it is contemplatively darkening into the awe of antiquity. But he will be recalled,—the sculptures, the inscriptions, the sanctuaries enclosed off for the special benefit, after death, of persons who had very different concerns during life from that of the care of their salvation, and various other insignia of the original character of the place, will help to recal him,—to the thought, that these proud piles were in fact raised to celebrate the conquest, and prolong the dominion, of the Power of Darkness over the souls of the people. They were as triumphal arches, erected in memorial of the extermination of that truth which was given to be the life of men.

As he looks round, and looks upward, on the prodigy of design, and skill, and perseverance, and tributary wealth, he may image to himself the multitudes that, during successive ages, frequented this fane in the assured belief, that the idle ceremonies and impious superstitions, which they there performed or witnessed, were a service acceptable to heaven, and to be repaid in blessings to the offerers. He may say to himself, Here, on this very floor, under that elevated and decorated vault, in a “dim religious light” like this, but with the darkness of the shadow of death in their souls, they prostrated themselves to their saints, or their “queen of heaven;” nay, to painted ima-

ges and toys of wood or wax, to some ounce or two of bread and wine, to fragments of old bones, and rags of clothing. Hither they came, when conscience, in looking either back or forward, dismayed them, to purchase remission with money or atoning penances, or to acquire the privilege of sinning in a certain manner, or for a certain time, with impunity; and they went out at yonder door in the perfect confidence that the priest had secured, in the one case the suspension, in the other the satisfaction, of the divine law. Here they solemnly believed, as they were taught, that, by donations to the church, they delivered the souls of their departed sinful relatives from their state of punishment; and they went out at that door resolved to bequeath some portion of their possessions, to operate in the same manner for themselves another day, in case of need. Here they were convened to listen in reverence to some representative emissary from the Man of Sin, with new dictates of blasphemy or iniquity to be promulgated in the name of the Almighty; or to witness the trickery of some detestable farce, devised to cheat or fright them out of whatever remainder the former impositions might have left to them of sense, conscience, or property. Here, in fine, there was never presented to their understanding, from their childhood to their death, a comprehensive honest declaration of the laws of duty, and the pure doctrines of salvation. To think! that they should have mistaken for the house of



God, and the very gate of heaven, a place where the Power of Darkness had so short a way to come from his appropriate dominions, and his agents and purchased slaves so short a way to go thither. If we could imagine a momentary visit from Him who once entered a fabric of sacred denomination with a scourge, because it was made the resort of a common traffic, with what aspect and voice, with what infliction but the "rebuke with flames of fire," would he have entered this mart of iniquity, assuming the name of his sanctuary, where the traffic was in delusions, crimes, and the souls of men? It was even as if, to use the prophet's language, the very "stone cried out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answered it," in denunciation; for a portion of the means of building, in the case of some of these edifices, was obtained as the price of dispensations and pardons.

In such a hideous light would the earlier history of one of these mighty structures, pretendedly consecrated to christianity, be presented to the reflecting protestant; and then would recur the idea of its cost, as relative to what that expenditure might really have done for christianity and the people. It absorbed in the construction, sums sufficient to have supplied even manuscript bibles, costly as they were, to all the families of a province; and in the revenues appropriated to its ministration of superstition, enough to have provided men to teach all those families to read those bibles.

In all this, and in the whole constitution of the Grand Apostacy, involving innumerable forms of mischief and abomination to which our object does not require any allusion, how sad a spectacle is held forth of the people destroyed for lack of knowledge. If, as one of their plagues, an inferior one in itself, they were plundered, as we have seen, of their worldly goods, it was that the spoil might subserve to a still greater wrong. What was lost to the accommodation of the body, was to be made to contribute to the depravation of the soul. It supplied means for multiplying the powers of the grand ecclesiastical machinery, and confirming the intellectual despotism of the absolute authorities in religion. Those authorities enforced on the people, on pain of final perdition, an acquiescence in principles and ordinances which, in effect, precluded their direct access to the Almighty, and the Savior of the world, interposing between them and the Divine Majesty a very extensive, complicated, and heathenish mediation, which in a great measure substituted itself for the real and exclusive mediation of Christ, obscured by its vast creation of intercepting vanities, the glory of the Eternal Being, and thus almost extinguished the true worship. But how calamitous was such a condition!—to be thus intercepted from direct intercourse with the Supreme Spirit, and to have the solemn and elevating sentiment of devotion flung downward, on objects and phantoms which even the most

superstitious could not pay homage to, without some indistinct sense of degradation.

It was, again, a disastrous thing to be under a directory of practical life framed for the convenience of a corrupt system, a rule which enjoined many things wrong, allowed a dispensation from every thing that was right, and abrogated the essential principle and groundwork of true morality. Still again, it was an unhappy thing, that the consolations in sorrow and the view of death should either be too feeble to animate, or should animate only by deluding. And it was the consummation of evil in the state of the people of those dark ages, it was, emphatically, to be "destroyed," that the grand doctrines of redemption should have been essentially vitiated or formally supplanted, so that multitudes of the people were betrayed to rest their final hopes on a ground unauthorized by the Judge of the world. In this most important matter, the spiritual authorities were subjects themselves of the fatal delusion in which they held the community; and well they deserved to be so, in judicial retribution of their wickedness in imposing on the people, deliberately and on system, innumerable things which they knew to be false.

We have often mused, and felt a gloom and dreariness spreading over the mind while we have mused, on descriptions of the aspect of a country after a pestilence has left it in desolation, or of a region where the people are perishing by famine. It has seemed a mournful thing.

to behold, in contemplation, the multitude of lifeless forms, occupying in silence the same abodes in which they had lived, or scattered upon the gardens, fields, and roads; and then to see the countenances of the beings yet languishing in life, looking despair, and impressed with the signs of approaching death. We have even sometimes had the vivid and horrid picture offered to our imagination, of a number of human creatures shut up by their fellow-mortals in some strong hold, under an entire privation of sustenance; and presenting each day their imploring, or infuriated, or grimly sullen, or more calmly woeful countenances, at the iron and impregnable grates; each succeeding day more haggard, more perfect in the image of despair; and after a while appearing each day one fewer, till at last all are gone. Now shall we feel it as a *relief* to turn in thought from the inhabitants of a country, or from those of such an accursed prison-house, thus pining away, to behold the different spectacle of numerous national tribes, or any small selection of persons, on whose *minds* are displayed the full effects of knowledge denied; who are under the process of whatever destruction it is, that spirits can suffer from the want of the vital aliment to the intelligent nature, especially from a "famine of the words of the Lord."

To bring the two to a close comparison, suppose the case, that some of the persons thus doomed to perish in the tower were in possession of the genuine light and consolations of

christianity, perhaps even had actually been adjudged to this fate, (no extravagant supposition,) for zealously and persistingly endeavoring the restoration of the purity of that religion to the deluded community. Let it be supposed that numbers of that community, having conspired to obtain this adjudgment, frequented the precincts of the fortress to see their victims gradually perishing. It would be perfectly in the spirit of the popish superstition, that they should believe themselves to have done God service, and be accordingly pleased at the sight of the more and more deathlike aspect of the emaciated countenances. The while, they might be in the enjoyment of "fulness of bread." We can imagine them making convivial appointments within sight of the prison grates, and going from the spectacle to meet at the banquet. Or they might delay the festivity, in order to have the additional luxury of knowing that the tragedy was consummated; as Bishop Gardiner would not dine till the martyrs were burnt.—Look at these two contemporary situations, that of the persons with truth and immortal hope in their minds, enduring this slow and painful reduction of their bodies to dissolution, and that of those who, while their bodies fared sumptuously, were thus miserably perishing in soul, through ignorance wrought into error and intense depravity: and say which was the more calamitous predicament.

If we have no hesitation in pronouncing, let us consider whether we have ever been grateful

enough to God for the dashing in pieces so long since, in this land, of a system which maintains, to this hour, much of its stability over the greater part of Christendom. If we regret that certain fragments of it are still held in veneration here, and that so tedious a length of ages should be required, to work out a complete mental rescue from what usurped the faculties of our ancestors, let us at the same time look at the various states of Europe, small and great, where this superstition continues to hold the minds of the people in its odious grasp, and verify to ourselves what we have to be thankful for, by thinking how *our* minds could subsist on their mummeries, masses, absolutions, legends, relics, mediation of saints, and corruptions, even to complete reversal, of the evangelic doctrines.

It was, however, but very slowly that the people of our land realized the benefits of the Reformation, glorious as that event was, regarded as to its progressive and its ultimate consequences. Indeed, the thickness of the preceding darkness was strikingly manifested by the deep shade which still continued stretched over the nation, in spite of the newly risen luminary, the beams of which lost much of their fire in pervading it to reach the popular mind, and came with the faintness of an obscured and tedious dawn.

Long there lingered enough of night for the evil spirit of popery to walk abroad in great power. How deplorably deficient and partial must have been the utmost effect to be obtained

by a change of formularies and of a portion of the hierarchy, with some curtailment of the ceremonial, when that effect was to be wrought upon profound ignorance fortified by being in the form of an inveterate superstition! and when the innovation in doctrine had no accompanying prodigies to strike the senses, in default of finding a qualified recipient in the reason, of beings who had never been trained to deal intellectually with any thing in all existence, nor could be ever the wiser for the volume of inspiration itself, had it been, in their native language, in every house, instead of being hardly in one house in five hundred.

It was doubtless a good thing at any rate, and a most important alteration, that a man should cease and refuse to worship relics and wafers, to rest his confidence on penance and priestly absolution, and to regard the Virgin and saints as in effect the supreme regency of heaven; a very good thing even though he *could* not read, nor apprehend the precise meaning and force of terms in the very argument on the strength of which he made his transition. Yes, this was a valuable thing gained; but not even thus much *was* gained, but in an exceedingly limited measure, during a long period of time. The superstition, long after being supplanted, as a national institution, by the reformed order of things, maintained a dominion but little diminished over a large proportion of the people, though reduced to consult, in its formal observances, the policy of saving appearances.

As far as to this policy, it was an excellent and persuasive argument that the State had decreed, and would resolutely enforce, a change in religion, that is to say till it should be the sovereign pleasure of a succeeding monarch, readily seconded by a majority of the ecclesiastical authorities, just to turn the whole matter round from north to south. But the argument would find its main strength expended upon this policy; its efficacy of persuasion would go no further; for what force could it carry inward to act upon the fixed tenets of the mind, to destroy there the effect of the earliest and ten thousand subsequent impressions, of inveterate habit, and of ancient authority? Was it to enforce itself in the form of saying, that the government, in church and state, was wiser than the people, and therefore the best judge in every matter? This, as a general proposition, was what the people most firmly believed; it has always been their prevailing faith. But then, was the benefit of that conviction to go exclusively to the government of just that particular time,—a government which, by its innovations and demolitions, was exhibiting a contemptuous dissent from all past government remembered in the land? Were the people not to hesitate a moment to take this innovating government's word for it that all their forefathers, up through an unknown length of ages, had been fools and dupes in reverencing, in their time, the wisdom and authority of *their* governors? The most unthinking and submis-



sive would feel that this was too much; especially after they had seen proof that the government so demanding, might, on the substitution of just one individual for another at its head, revoke its own last year's decrees and ordinances, and punish those who should contumaciously continue to be ruled by them. You summon us, they might have said to their governors, at your arbitrary dictate to renounce, as what you are pleased to call idolatries and abominations, the faith and rites held sacred by twenty generations of our ancestors and yours. We are to do this on peril of your highest displeasure, and that of God, whom you so easily assume as your authority or ally; now who will insure us that, within a few months, there may not be a vindictive inquisition made who among us has been the most obsequiously prompt to offer wicked insult to the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church?

Thus baffled must the force of the state authority have been on the minds of the multitude. Nor would this deficiency of influence be supplied by the authority of the class held next to the government in the right to claim deference, since the people well knew, in their respective neighborhoods, that many of the persons of consequence throughout the country had never in reality renounced the ancient religion. And while deficient in these means of enforcement, the reformed religion was naturally so much the less attractive, to vast numbers, for appearing shorn, in a material degree,

of the pomp which is always the delight of the ignorant, and for having no privileges to offer in the way of commutation and indulgence in matters of conscience. When such were the recommendations which it had *not*, and when that which it *had*, was, that it appealed to the understanding *that it was true*, no wonder the unintelligent multitude were very slow to yield their assent and submission. Great numbers of them were faithful to the infatuation in which they had been brought up, and did not become proselytes. But even as to those who did, while it was a happy deliverance, as we have said, to escape on almost any terms from the utter grossness of popery, still they would carry into their better faith, (it is of the uneducated people that we speak,) much of the unhappy effect of that previous debasement of their mental existence. A man cannot be completely ignorant and stupified as to truth in general, and have a luminous apprehension of one of its particulars. There would not be in men's minds a similitude to what we image to ourselves of Goshen in the preternatural night of Egypt, a space defined out in full brightness with a precise limit amidst the general thick darkness. The rejection and substitution of religious ideas, in the perfectly illiterate converts from popery, would not appear with a magnitude of change and contrast proportioned to the difference between a compost of lying vanities and vile practical principles, and a religion which had originally come on earth in the

light and sanctity of the third heaven. There had been inflicted for life, and to be prolonged for generations downward, among the common people, the doom of entertaining genuine Christianity itself, restored by the Reformation, with an excessively inadequate apprehension of its attributes,—as in the primitive ages a good man might have entertained a heaven-commissioned visitant as a respectable human sojourner, unaware that it was an angel. Happy for both the worthy ancient, and the honest though rude and ignorant adopter of the reformed religion, when that which they entertained repaid them according to its own quality of an angel, and not in proportion to their inadequate reception. This consideration of how much good was, we may believe, conferred by the restored true religion on many honest disciples, (notwithstanding that, from the profound ignorance in which barbarism and superstition had sunk and kept them, they were utterly incapable of forming more than a meagre and degraded conception of it,) affords more of a relief than any other thing presented in the dreary spectacle of the period in which popery was slowly retiring, with a protracted effort to maintain its dominion at every step of its retreat.

## SECTION V.

*Intellectual Condition of the Mass of Population in England since the reign of Elizabeth.*

Of a very different kind, however, are the circumstances most readily exhibiting themselves to view in alleviation of the gloom with which we might contemplate that period of our history; or rather they would beguile us out of the perception of its being a gloomy scene at all. For we all look back with pleasure to that age of our nation when Elizabeth reigned. How can we refuse to indulge a delightful sympathy with the energy of those times, and an elation at beholding the splendid unparalleled allotment to her reign and service, of statesmen, heroes, and literary geniuses, but for whom "that bright occidental star" would have left no such brilliant track of fame behind her? But, all this while, what was the intellectual state of the people, properly so denominated, and what should we deem it ought to have been in order to be in due proportion to the magnificence of these their representative chiefs? There is evidence that it was, what the infernal blight and blast of popery might be expected to have left it, generally and most wretchedly degraded. What it was, is shewn by the facts, that it was found impossible, even under the inspiring auspices of the literate Elizabeth, with her constellation of geniuses,

orators, scholars, to supply the churches generally with officiating persons capable of going with decency through the task of the public service, made ready, as every part of it was, to their hands; and that to be able to read, was the very marked distinction of here and there an individual. It requires little effort but that of going low enough, to complete the general account in conformity to such facts.

And here we cannot help remarking what a deception we suffer to pass on us from history. It celebrates some period in a nation's career as pre-eminently illustrious, for magnanimity, lofty enterprise, literature, and original genius. There was perhaps a learned and vigorous monarch, and there were Cécils and Walsinghams, and Shakespears and Spensers, and Sidneys and Raleighs, with many other powerful thinkers and actors, to render it the proudest age of our national glory. And we thoughtlessly admit on our imagination this splendid exhibition, as representing, in some indistinct manner, the collective state of the people in that age! The ethereal summits of a tract of the moral world are conspicuous and fair in the lustre of heaven, and we take no thought of the immensely greater proportion of it which is sunk in gloom and covered with fogs. The general mass of the population, whose physical vigor, indeed, and courage, and fidelity to the interests of the country, were of such admirable avail to the purposes, and under the direction, of the mighty spirits that wielded

their rough agency,—this great mass was sunk in such mental barbarism, as to be placed at about the same distance from their illustrious intellectual chiefs, as the hordes of Scythia from the most elevated minds of Athens. It was nothing to this great debased multitude spread over the country, existing in the coarsest habits, destitute, in the proportion of ten thousand to one, of cultivation, and still to a considerable extent enslaved by the popish superstition,—it was nothing, directly, to them, as to drawing forth their minds into free exercise and acquirement, that there were, within the circuit of the island, a profound scholarship, a most disciplined and vigorous reason, a masculine eloquence, and genius breathing enchantment. Both the actual possessors of these noble things, and the portion of society forming, around them, the sphere immediately pervaded by the delight and instruction imparted by them, might as well, for any thing they diffused of this luxury and benefit among the general multitude, have been a Brahminical cast, dissociated by an imagined essential distinction of nature. This prostrate multitude grovelled through life as through dark subterraneous passages, to their graves. Yet *they* were the *nation*; *they* formed the great aggregate which, under that name and image of consociation, has been historically mocked with an implied community in the application of the superb epithets, which a small proportion of the men of that age claimed by a striking ex-

*ception* to the condition of the mass. History too much consults our love of effect and pomp, to let us see in a close and distinct manner any thing

“On the low level of th’ inglorious throng;”

and our attention is borne away to the intellectual splendor exhibited among the most favored aspirants of the seats of learning, or in councils, in courts, camps, and heroic and romantic enterprises, and in some immortal works of genius. And thus we are as if gazing with delight at a prodigious public bonfire, while, in all the cottages round, the people are shivering for want of fuel.

Our history becomes very bright again with the intellectual and literary riches of a much later period, often denominated a golden age,—that which was illustrated by the talents of Addison, Pope, Swift, and their numerous secondaries in fame, and which was amply furnished, too, with its philosophers, statesmen, and heroes. And what had been effected by the lapse of four or five ages, according to the average term of human life, since the earlier grand display of mind, to advance the mental condition of the general population toward a point, at which it would be prepared for ready and intelligent communication with this next tribe of highly endowed spirits? By this time, the class of persons who sought knowledge on a wider scale than what sufficed for the ordinary affairs of life, who took an interest in liter-

ature, and constituted the *Authors' Public*, extended somewhat beyond the people of condition, the persons formally receiving a high education, and those whose professions involved some necessity, and might create some taste, for reading. But still they *were* a *class*, and that with a limitation marked and palpable, to a degree very difficult for us now to conceive. They were in contact, indeed, on the one side, with the great thinkers, moralists, poets, and wits, but not with the great mass of the people on the other. They received the emanations of the powerful assemblage of talent and knowledge, but did not serve as conductors to convey them down indefinitely into the community. While these distinguished minds, and this class instructed and animated by them, formed the superior part of the great national body, that body, the collective national being, was intellectually in a condition too much resembling what we have sometimes heard of a human frame in which, (through an injury in the spinal marrow,) some of the most important functions of vitality have terminated at some precise limit downward, and the inferior extremities have been devoid of sensation and the power of action.

It is on record, that works admirably adapted to find readers, and to make them, had but an extremely confined and slowly widening circulation, according to *our* standard of the popular success of the productions of distinguished genius. It is even apparent in allusions to the



people in these works themselves, that "the lower sort," "the vulgar herd," "the canaille," "the mob," "the many-headed beast," "the million," (and even these designations often meant something short of the lowest class of all,) were no more thought of in any relation to a state of cultivated intelligence than Turks or Tartars. The writers are habitually seen, in the very mode of addressing their readers, recognizing them as a kind of select community; and any references to the main bulk of society are unaffectedly in a manner implying, that it is just merely recollected as a herd of beings existing on quite other terms, and for other purposes, than we, fine writers, and you, our admiring readers. Indeed it is apparent in our literature of that age, (a feature still more prominent in that of France, at that and down to a much later period,) that the main national population were held by the mental lords in the most genuine sovereign contempt, as creatures to which souls were given just to render their bodies mechanically serviceable.

Wrong as such a feeling was, there is no doubt that the actual state of the people was perfectly adapted to excite it, in men whose large and richly cultivated minds did not contain philanthropy or christian charity enough to regret the popular debasement as a calamity. For while they were indulging their pride in the elevation, and their taste in all the luxuries and varieties, within the range of that ampler higher existence enjoyed by such men, and

could even infuse a refinement and a grace into the very turpitude of the elegant part of society, the great living crowd of the nation would appear to them as—a good stout race of animals, indeed, and well fitted for their appointed use, supposing it an use which left mind out of the account, but—as a contemptible and offensive mass of barbarism, if to be viewed in any reference to what man is in his higher style. While they of this higher style were revelling in an unlimited opulence of ideas, the majority of the inhabitants of the island were reduced to subsist on the most beggarly pittance on which mind could be barely kept alive. Probably they had still fewer ideas than the people of the former age which we have been describing. For many of those with which popery had occupied the faith and fancy of those earlier people, had now vanished from the popular mind, without being replaced in equal number by better ideas, or by ideas of any kind. And then their vices had the whole grossness of vice, and their favorite amusements were at best rude and boisterous, and a large proportion of them detestably savage and cruel. So that when we look at the shining wits, poets, and philosophers, of that age, they appear like gaudy flowers growing in a putrid marsh.

And to a much later period the same dreadful ignorance, with all its appropriate consequences, formed the intellectual and moral condition of the inhabitants of England. Of Eng-

land! which had through many centuries made so great a figure in christendom; which has been so splendid in arms, liberty, legislation, science, and all manner of literature; which has boasted its universities of early establishment and proudest fame, of munificently endowed, and possessed of stupendous accumulations of literary treasure; and which has had, through the charity of individuals, such a multitude of minor institutions for education, that it was thought it could be afforded to let many of them fall into desuetude, as to *that* purpose. Of England! so long after the Reformation, and all the while under the superintendence and tuition of an ecclesiastical establishment extending both its instruction and jurisdiction over every part of the realm, conjunct and armed with the power of the state, supported by an immense revenue, and furnished with mental qualifications from the most venerable institutions for instruction perhaps in the world. Thus favored had England been, thus was she favored at the period under our review, (the former part of the last century,) with the facilities, the provisions, the great intellectual apparatus, to be wielded in whatsoever modes she might devise, and with whatever strength of hand she chose to apply, for promoting her several millions of rational, accountable, immortal beings, somewhat beyond a state of mere physical existence. When therefore, notwithstanding all this, an awful proportion of them were under the continual process of de-

struction for want of knowledge, what a tremendous responsibility was insensibly borne by whatever portion of the community it was that stood, either by formal vocation, or by the general obligation inseparable from ability, in the relation of guardianship to the rest.

But here some voice of patriotic scepticism may be heard to say, Surely this is a wantonness of reproach. Is it possible that that could be so flagrant and mighty an evil, which the combined power, wealth, intelligence, and religion of England so long tranquilly suffered to be prevalent in the state of the people? England has been a nation breathing another spirit than to tolerate long any gross moral deformity, which her utmost energy could remove or modify.

Alas! this would be a thoughtless and rash encomium. There is no saying *what* a civilized and christian nation; (so called,) may not tolerate. Recollect the Slave Trade, which, with the magnitude of a national concern, continued its infernal course of abominations while one generation after another of Englishmen passed away; and the united illumination, conscience, and power, of the country, maintained as faithful a peace with it, as if the Divine anger had been apprehended against whatever should attempt its molestation. The being sensible of the true characters of good and evil in the world around us, is a thing strangely subject to the effect of habit, not only in the uncultivated bulk of the community, but also in the more

select and responsible persons. The highly instructed and intelligent men, through a series of generations, shall have directly within their view an enormous nuisance and iniquity, and yet shall very rarely think of it, and never be made restless by its annoyance; and so its odiousness shall never be decidedly apprehended till some individual or two, as by the acquisition of a new moral sense, receive a sudden intuition of its nature, a disclosure of its most interior essence and malignity,—the essence and malignity of that very thing which has been offering its quality to view, without the least reserve, and in the most flagrant signs, to millions of observers.

Thus it has been with respect to the barbarous ignorance under which nine tenths, at the least, of the population of our country, have been, during a number of ages subsequent to the Reformation, surrendered to every thing low, vicious, and wretched. This state of things was manifest in its whole breadth of debasement and national dishonor, to statesmen, to dignified and subordinate ecclesiastics, to magistrates, to the philosophic contemplators of actual human nature, and to all those whose rank and opulence brought them hourly proofs what influence they could exert on the people below them. And still it appeared all very right, at least substantially so, that the multitudes, constituting the grand living agency through the realm, should remain in such a condition that, when they died, the country should lose no-

thing but so much living body, and the quantum of vice which had probably helped to keep it in action. It is a most ungracious thing that we should have to add, that a large proportion of these classes not only were slow to admit the reformed doctrine which began at length to pronounce all this to be wrong, but systematically decried the speculations, and plans, which philanthropy was growing earnest to bring to some practical bearing on the object of giving the people, at last, the use and value of their souls as well as their hands. The philanthropists wondered, perhaps, rather inconsiderately, at this phenomenon; and it gave them, as by force, more insight into human nature. This unwelcome manner of having the insight sharpened does not tend to make its subsequent exercise very indulgent. But nevertheless, they are willing to forego any shrewd investigation into the causes of the later silence or acquiescence of some of these opposers, and of the motives instigating others of them to the adoption, though in a frowning and repellent mood, of measures tending in their general effect to the same end. Were they even compelled to entertain an unfavorable judgment or suspicion of those motives, they would recollect an example, not altogether foreign to the nature of their business, and quite in point to their duty, that of the great Apostle's magnanimous conception of the right policy and calculation for the zealous promoter of a good cause. He exulted to seize, and bring into his capacious

reckoning, the very proceedings promoted by a rival or hostile disposition, toward himself, when they were such that they *must*, however intended, conduce to his great object. Some preached Christ of envy, and strife, and contention, supposing to add afflictions to his bonds; but, says he, What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or truth, Christ is preached—the *thing itself is done*,—and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. This is the high style and the great scale of ambition and policy, which will not let a good cause lose the advantage of any thing that may have unwittingly pronounced its name, though without the genuine spirit to serve it; and which assumes as something gained for it, all things that in their leading effect advance it, notwithstanding any offensive subordinate aim of their action. He who is to this degree devoted to the cause, may triumphantly say to those who are doing what necessarily advances it, but on a principle unamicable to him,—I am far more pleased by what you are in point of fact contributing, whatever be the temper, to the great object which I am intent upon, than it is possible for you to aggrieve me by letting me perceive that you would not be sorry for the frustration of *my* schemes and exertions for its service.

We revert but for one moment to the review of past times.—We said that long after the brilliant shew of talent, and the creation of literary supplies for the national use, in the early part of the last century, the deplorable mental

condition of the people remained in no very great degree altered. To look on that bright and sumptuous display, regarded as in connexion with the subsequent state of the popular cultivation, is like going out from some magnificent apartment, with its lustrés, music, refectious, and assemblage of elegant personages, into the gloom and fog and cold of a winter night, beset too by shivering beggars.

Take a few hours' indulgence in the literary luxuries of Addison and Pope, and then turn to some authentic plain representation of the attainments and habits of the mass of the people, at the time when Whitefield and Wesley commenced their invasion of the barbarous community. But the benevolent reader, (or let him be a patriotically proud one,) is quite reluctant to recognize his country, his celebrated christian nation, the most enlightened in the world, in a populace for the far greater part as perfectly estranged from the page of knowledge as if printing, or even letters, had never been invented; the younger part finding their supreme delight in rough frolic and savage sports, the old sinking down into impenetrable stupefaction with the decline of the vital principle.

If he would please himself with the courage, and a certain natural rudimental good sense, which are acknowledged to have characterized the people, he has to observe these beset and befooled by a multitude of the most contemptible superstitions, contemptible not only for their stupid absurdity, but also as hav-



ing in general nothing of that pensive, lofty, and poetical character, which superstition itself is capable of assuming, and did assume in the northernmost part of the island.

As to religion, there is no hazard in saying, that several millions of them had no further notion of it than that it was an occasional, or in the opinion of perhaps one in twenty, a regular attendance at church, hardly taking into the account that they were to be taught any thing there. And what *were* they taught? The state of their notions would be, so to speak, brought out, it would be made apparent what they were taught or not taught, when so strong and general a sensation was produced by the irruption among them of the two reformers just named, proclaiming, as they both did, notwithstanding their considerable difference, the grand principles which the venerable Reformers, so called by eminence, had made the very essence of the national creed. And, bearing with them this quality of a test, which would prove, by the manner of their reception, the nature of the popular christianity, how were these men received? Why, on account of their doctrine, fully as much as of the zeal with which they promulgated it, they were generally received with as complete an impression of novelty and outlandishness, as any of our voyagers and travellers of discovery have been by the barbarous tribes who had never before seen civilized man; or as the Spaniards on their arrival in Mexico or Peru. They might, as the

voyagers have done, experience every local difference of moral temperament, from that which hailed them with acclamations, to that which went off in a volley of mud and brickbats; but through all these varieties of greetings, there was a strong sense of something novel and passing strange in what they proclaimed as religion. "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears," was an expression not uttered more fully in the meaning of the words by any hearer of an apostle, preaching in a heathen city. And to many of the auditors, it was a matter of nearly as much difficulty as it would to an inquisitive heathen, and required as new a posture of the mind, to obtain a clear view of the evangelical doctrines, though they were the very same which had been held forth by the fathers and martyrs of the English Church.

We have alluded to the violence, which sometimes encountered the endeavor to restore these doctrines to the knowledge and faith of the people. And if any one should have thought that, in the descriptions we have been giving, too frequent and willing use has been made of the epithet "barbarous," and similar words, as if we could have a perverse pleasure in degrading our nation, we would request him to select for himself the appropriate terms for estimating that state of the people, in point of sense and decency, to say nothing of religion, which could admit of such a thing as the following becoming a fact in their history; name-

ly, that, in a vast number of instances and places, where some person, unexceptionable in character as far as known, and sometimes well known to be of undeniable worth, has attempted to address a number of the inhabitants, under a roof or under the sky, on what it imported them beyond all things in the world to know and consider, a multitude has rushed together shouting and howling, raving and cursing, and accompanying, in many of the instances, their ferocious cries and yells with loathsome or dangerous missiles; dragging or driving the preacher from his humble stand, forcing him, and the few that wished to encourage and hear him, to flee for their lives, sometimes not without serious injury before they could escape. And these savage tumults have, in many cases, been well understood to be instigated or abetted by persons, whose advantage of superior condition in life, or even express vocation to instruct the people better, has been infamously lent in defence of the perpetrators against shame, or remorse, or legal punishment, for the outrage.

There would be no hazard, we believe, in affirming, that since Wesley and Whitefield began the conflict with the heathenism of the country, there have been in it hundreds of occurrences answering in substance to this description. From any one, therefore, who should be inclined to accuse us of harsh language, we may well repeat the demand in what terms *he* would think he gave the true charac-

ter of a mental and moral condition, manifested in such explosions of obstreperous savage violence as the christian missionaries among eastern idolaters never have the slightest cause to apprehend. These occurrences were so far from uncommon half a century back, that they might fairly be taken as symptoms of a habitual state. Yet the good and zealous men whose lot it was to be, in various places, thus set upon by a furious rabble of many hundreds, the foremost of them active in direct violence, and the rest venting their ferocious delight in a hideous blending of ribaldry and execration, of joking and cursing, were taxed with a canting hypocrisy, or a fanatical madness, for speaking of the prevailing ignorance and barbarism in terms equivalent to our sentence from the Prophet, "The people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," and deploring that the existing institutions were utterly inefficient for any revolution in this empire of darkness. But those, whom direct danger could not deter from renewing and indefinitely repeating such attempts at all hazards, were little likely to be appalled by these contumelies of speech. They might have laughed at the persons so abusing them, and said, "Now really you are inconsiderately wasting your labor. Don't you know, that on the score of this same business we have sustained the battery of stones, bricks, and the contents of the ditch? And is it possible you should think, that we can much care for the force of mere words, gibes, and sneers, after

that? Albeit the opprobrious phrases *have* all the coarse violence of a proud rich proprietor, or the more highly inspirited tone of invective learnt in a college, they are quite another kind of thing to be the mark for, than such assailments as have come from the brawny arms of some of your peasants."—It is gratifying to see thus exemplified, in the endurance of evil for a good cause, the effect of that provision in our nature for economizing the expense of feeling, through which the encountering of the greater reduces the less to insignificance.

That our descriptive observations do not exaggerate the popular ignorance, with its natural concomitants, as prevailing at the middle, and down far beyond the middle, of the last century, many of the elderly and middle-aged persons among us can readily confirm, from what they remember of the testimony of their immediate ancestors, some of them perhaps not very long removed from the world. It will easily be recollected what pictures they gave, of the moral scene spread over the country when they were young. They could convey lively images of the situations in which the vulgar notions and manners had their free display, by representing the assemblages, and the cast of communication, at fairs, revels, and other rendezvous of amusement, or in the field of rural employment, or on the village green, or in front of the mechanic's shop. They could recount various anecdotes characteristic of the times; and repeat short dialogues, or single sayings, which expressed

the very essence of what was to the population of the township or province, instead of law and prophets, or sages or apostles. They could describe how free from all sense of shame whole families would seem to be, from grandsires down to the third rude reckless generation, for not being able to read; and how well content, when there was some one individual in the neighborhood who could read an advertisement, or ballad, or last dying speech of a malefactor, for the benefit of the rest. They could describe the awful desolation of the land, with respect to any enlightening and impressive religious instruction in the places of worship, and what wretched and delusive notions of religion such of them as cared to pay any attention at all to its public observances, were permitted and authorized, by their appointed spiritual guides, to carry with them to their last hour; at which hour, some ceremonial form was to be a passport to heaven. A little bread and wine, under an ecclesiastical designation, and with the recital of some sentences regarded much in the nature of an incantation,—and all was safe! The sinner expiring believed so, and the sinners surviving were allowed to form their plan of life on a calculation of the same final resource.\*

\* The form of address to an auditory, retained thus far and still further on in the original composition of these observations, (conformably to the purpose for which they had first been meditated and used,) is so expressly marked in the paragraph which here immediately follows, that it cannot well be modified to fall without awkwardness into the course of the composition in its present more general character. In a note it may be read or passed by. It stands thus:

"Some of you can hardly fail to be, at this moment, recollecting descriptions which you may have heard given by persons of the pre-

Thus the past age has left, as imparted through immediate tradition, an image of its character in the minds of the generation now themselves growing old. Here and there, indeed, there lingers, long after the departure of the great company to which he belonged, an ancient who retains in some degree this image immediately from the reality, as having become of an age to look at the world, and take a share in its activities, about the middle of the last century. It might be an employment of considerable though rather melancholy interest, for a person visiting many parts of the land, to put in requisition, in each place, for a day or two, the most faithful of the memories of the most narrative of the oldest people, for the materials from which to form an estimate of the mental

ceding generation, of the condition, as they could remember it, of the people of some districts in the neighborhood of this city, (Bristol.) In those accounts they described some of the persons, and leagues of persons, of local notoriety, whose daring and address gave them the precedence in an uncivilized community; related incidental rencounters and conversations with individuals of the inhabitants; and detailed the circumstances of some formidable affray, or some mischievous or fatal violence committed against strangers passing through the country. And perhaps it was told in what manner religion itself and its teachers were received by them, when it was begun to be introduced, in a form absolutely new to them, by those its worthy champions who could set at nought abuse and danger when an attempt was to be made to rescue men's souls. Such of you as have the clearest remembrance of these recitals by contemporaries and observers of the facts, will acknowledge that no general terms can aggravate or equal the wildness and gloominess of the scene, in which an ignorance, nearly as profound as any thing we can well imagine in the centre of Africa, had its legitimate effect, in the cherishing, letting loose, and justifying, of all the active propensities to evil, and that with a remarkable local advantage of system and compact. The depraved spirit of the population, acting with such a collectiveness of force, might be said to constitute a great moral steam-engine of iniquity,—if a fancied analogy between the then state of the mind in the district, and the now conspicuous mechanical appearances on it, may warrant such a metaphor."

and moral state of the main body of the inhabitants, of town or country, in the period of which they themselves saw the latter part, and retain also many recollections of what their progenitors testified of the former. With the removal of these persons the image of that age, in its most vivid delineation on the mind, will become extinct. It will soon, therefore, be no otherwise to be acquired than from written memorials.

But if we could have it placed before the mental eye in all the luminousness of a supernatural manifestation, are we sure we should not have the mortification of perceiving that the change, from that condition of popular attainments and habits to the present, has been but in a humiliating proportion to the ostensible amount of the advantages, which we are apt to be elated in recounting as the boast and happiness of a later age? If we had *not* this mortifying impression, if on the contrary, the people of the present times, thus brought into comparison, appeared so much less ignorant and debased as a moderate efficacy of their greater advantages would have rendered them, then, it is certain, we should behold those former people presented in a still darker character than we have been depicting. For what must that moral condition have been, if it was worse than the present by any thing near the difference of a tolerably fair improvement of the additional means latterly afforded? If it has taken so much to make the present generation



but what it is, what must they have been to whom as means, and in whom as effect, all this was wanting?

The means wanting to the former generations, and that have sprung into existence for the latter, may be briefly named.—There has been a vast extension of the system of preaching, by the classes of christians that arose under the influence of the happy innovation of Whitefield and Wesley, but especially by the followers of the latter; a connexion of christians which, (while many of us differ materially from their theological tenets, and while we may attribute to them some certain modicum too much of ambition in capacity of a religious body, combined with a good deal too much tendency to servility to power in capacity of citizens, also a small portion more than is *defensively* necessary of the Ishmaelitish quality, as toward other sects of dissenters, and some exemplification of the difficulty of perfectly combining temperance and zeal in religious feelings,) we must acknowledge to be doing incalculable good in the nation, more good probably than any other religious denomination. We may add, the progressive formation of a serious zealous evangelical ministry in the Established Church, and the rapid extension of the dissenting worship and teaching.

These being things of directly *religious* operation, it perhaps might seem for a moment questionable whether they are more than very partially to the purpose, in an enumeration of

the agencies for banishing the *ignorance* of the community. But we hardly need to say, that true religion, besides that it is knowledge, of the most important order, in whatever degree it occupies the understanding, is a marvellous improver of the *sense* of uneducated persons, by creating in them a habit of serious thought, which has in many instances been seen to have the effect of making them appear to have acquired, in the space of a very few years, double the measure of intellectual faculty they had ever shewn before.

And then there have been the diversified causes and expedients, contributing to the increase of knowledge among the people in a mode less specifically directed to the religious effect. There was the grand novelty of Sunday Schools, which conferred immense benefit themselves, and encouraged instead of superseding the formation of other schools. There was a large production and circulation of tracts, which shewed how well entertainment might be made, by the proper hands, to subserve to moral and religious instruction without lessening its seriousness, and which will remain a monument of the talent, knowledge, and benevolence, of that distinguished benefactor of her country and age, Mrs. H. More, perhaps even preeminent above her many excellent works in a higher strain. Later issues of tracts, in different forms of composition, to the amount almost of an inundation, have solicited millions of thoughtless beings to begin to think. The enormous flight

of periodical miscellanies, and of newspapers, must be taken as both the indication and the cause that hundreds of thousands of persons were giving some attention to the matters of general information, where their grandfathers were, during the intervals of time allowed by their employments, prating, brawling, sleeping, or drinking, the hours away.

When we come down to a comparatively recent time, we see the Bible "going up on the breadth of the land;" schools, of a construction, devised as in rivalry of the multiplied forces in the finest mechanical inventions, in a hopeful progress toward general adoption; and an extensive practice, by the instrumentality of missionary and other benevolent institutions, of rendering familiar to common knowledge a great number of such interesting and important facts, in the state of other countries and our own, as would formerly have been far beyond the sphere of ordinary information.

The statement would be signally deficient, if we omitted to observe, that the prodigious commotion in the political world, during a third part of a century, has been a grand cause, in whatever proportion it may be judged that the attendant evil has balanced against the good, of any observable rising of the popular mind from its former stagnation. In all time there has not been a combination of events with principles that has, within so short a period, stirred to the very bottom the mind of so vast a portion of the race. The mighty spirit of the com-

motion has not only agitated men's passions and tempers, but through these, and with all the force of these, has reached their opinions.

But reverting to the account of minor and more specific instrumentality, in our own country, we may add, that for a good many years past, there has been a most prolific inventiveness in making almost every sort of information offer itself in brief, familiar, and attractive forms, adapted to youth or to adult ignorance; so that knowledge, which was formerly a thing to be searched and dug for, "as for hid treasures," has seemed at last beginning to effloresce through the surface of the ground on all sides of us.—And, now, when we have put all these things together, we may well pause to indulge again our wonder what *could* have been the mental situation of the inferior orders, the great majority of our nation, antecedently to the creation of this modern comprehensive economy of so many influences and means, for awakening them to something of an intelligent existence.

## CHAPTER II.

VARIOUS ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE EVILS ATTENDANT  
ON AN UNEDUCATED STATE OF A PEOPLE.

## SECTION I.

*Degradation of the lower class shown by contrast  
with something better within that class itself.*

THE gloomy review of the past, however, may here be terminated. And how happy were it, if here also terminated the prevalence of that which makes it so gloomy, if all these later multiplied means for forming a more enlightened race, were seen to have had so much success, that, with respect to the people of our country, the Prophet's expression, which led us into the train of description, might here be dismissed as a mere sentence of history. But we are compelled to see how slow is the progress of mankind toward thus rendering obsolete any of the darker lines of the sacred book. So completely, so desperately, had the whole popular body and being been pervaded by the stupifying power of the long reign of ignorance,—with such heavy reluctance, at the best, does the human mind open its eyes to admit light,—and so incommensurate as yet, even on the supposition of its having much less of this reluctance, has been in quantity the whole new sup-

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ply of means for a happy change,—that we have still before us a most melancholy spectacle.

Even that proportion of beneficial effect which actually has resulted from this new creation and co-operation of means, but serves to bring out to view, in more ungracious manifestation, the ignorance and debasement, still obviously constituting the character of immensely the greater part of the population of our land; as a dreary waste is made to look still more dreary by the little inroads of cultivation and beauty in its hollows, and the faint advances of an unwonted green upon its borders. The degradation of the lower class is the most forcibly illustrated, as seen in contrast with something better within that class itself. It is not with the great literati and philosophers, that men would ever think of comparing the untutored rustics, and laborers in handicraft. The two classes were as antipodes of the moral world, and could not be kept in sight both at once. They were regarded as having their respective places in the system, as formed for quite different modes of moral subsistence, as hardly required on the one side, or permitted on the other, to recognise in each other a common nature; as being, in short, under an allotment which rendered it idle to speculate on any expedients for their approximation, or to regret, that no slight humble participation could be afforded to the one class, of that in the fullness of which the other deems itself to verify

the nobleness of the rational nature. But now, when such a humble participation *has* been afforded, a description of people has been formed, contiguous to the multitude, or rather intermingled with them; and it is between this improved portion and the general crowd, that the grievous contrast arises. It certainly were ridiculous enough to fix on a laboring man and his family, and affect to deplore that he is doomed not to behold the depths and heights of science, not to expatiate over the wide field of history, not to luxuriate among the delights, refinements, and infinite diversities of literature; and that his family are not growing up in a training to every high accomplishment, after the pattern of some neighboring family, favored by fortune, and perhaps unusual ability combined with the highest cultivation in those at their head. But it is a quite different thing to take this man and his family, unable perhaps, both himself and they, even to read, and therefore sunk in all the debasement of ignorance,—and compare them with another man and family in the same sphere of life, but who have received the utmost improvement within the reach of that situation, and learnt to set the proper value on the advantage; who often employ the leisure hour in reading, (sometimes socially and with intermingled converse,) such instructive and innocently entertaining things as they can procure, are detached from constant and chosen society with the absolute vulgar; have acquired much of the decorums of

life, can take some intelligent interest in the great events of the world, and are prevented, by what they read and hear, from forgetting that there is another world. It is, we repeat, after thus seeing what may, and in particular instances does exist, in a humble condition, that we are compelled to regard as an absolutely horrible spectacle the still prevailing state of our national population.

The brief display which we would attempt, in several of the most prominent particulars, of the evils of an uneducated state of the people, is not to be regarded as peculiarly and exclusively a representation of the popular condition in this country, as if meant precisely as a portrait. But a general description of what is naturally inseparable from prevailing ignorance in the national multitude will necessarily be, in substance, a picture of our people; and it is chiefly from what is too conspicuous among them, that our specific illustrations will be taken.

The subject is to the last degree unattractive. It is totally unsusceptible of that something partaking of magnificence in the display, which so readily, though mischievously, throws itself over some of the forms in which depravity and misery make a prey of mankind. Nor does it afford any thing of that wild and picturesque character, in which some of the fantastic shapes of pagan superstition array themselves to our view. The representation, too, while it displays degradation and wretched-



ness in one whole class, reflects ungraciously, at least by implication, on other classes who may be supposed to look at the spectacle. And also, the whole matter of the exhibition must have the disadvantage, as to arresting attention, of being mere obvious fact, plain to the view of whoever looks around him. But indeed, ought it not to be so much the better, when we are pleading for a certain mode of benevolent exertion, that every one can see, and that no one can deny, the sad reality of all that forms the object, and imposes the duty, of that exertion?

Look, then, at the neglected ignorant class in their childhood and youth. One of the most obvious circumstances is, that there is not formed in their minds any thing of the nature of an estimate of the life before them. The human being should, as early as possible, have fixed within him a notion of what he is in existence for, of what the life before him is for. It ought to be among the chief of the things which he early becomes aware of, that the course of activity he is beginning should have a leading principle of direction, some predominant aim, a general and comprehensive purpose, paramount to the divers particular objects he may pursue. It should be as much in his settled apprehension as the necessity of his having an employment in order to live, that there is something it imports him to be, which he will not become, merely by passing from one day into another, by eating, growing taller and

stronger, seizing what share he can of noisy sport, and performing appointed portions of work; and that *not* to be, that which it so imports him to be, will of necessity be to be worthless and miserable.

We are not entertaining the extravagant fancy of the possibility, except in some rare instances of premature thoughtfulness, of turning inward into deep habitual reflection, the spirit that naturally goes outward, in these vivacious, active, careless beings, when we assert that it is possible to teach many of them with a degree of success, in very juvenile years, to apprehend and admit such a principle. We have many times seen this exemplified in fact. We have found some of them appearing apprised that *life is for something as a whole*; and that, to answer that general purpose, a mere succession of interests and activities, each engaged in for his own sake, will not suffice. They could comprehend, that the multiplicity of interests and activities in detail, instead of being allowed, without plan or pervading principle, to constitute and be that general purpose, were to be things selected and regulated in reference and amenableness to it.—By the comprehensive and presiding object, we do not rigorously and exclusively mean the religious concern, (though that is the most essential thing in it,) but the combination of all those interests and attainments, for the sake of which it is worth while to have the activities of life disposed into a system, instead of being left to casualty. The

scheme will bear toward ultimate felicity; but will also take large account of what is to be attempted and hoped for in this life.

Now, we no more expect to find any such idea of a presiding purpose of life, than we do the profoundest philosophical reflection, in the minds of the uneducated children and youth. They think nothing at all about their existence and life in any moral reference whatever. They know no good that it is to have been endowed with a rational rather than a brute nature, excepting that thus they have the privilege of tormenting brutes with impunity. They think nothing about what they shall become, and very little about what shall become of them. There is nothing that tells them of the relations, for good and evil, of present things with future and remote ones. The whole energy of their moral and intellectual nature goes out as in brute instinct on present objects, to make the most they can of them for the moment, taking the chance for whatever may be next. They are left totally devoid even of the thought, that what they are doing is the beginning of a life; their whole faculty is engrossed in the doing of it; and whether it signify any thing to the next ensuing stage of life, or to the last, is as foreign to any calculation of theirs, as the idea of reading their destiny in the stars. Not only, therefore, is there an entire preclusion from their minds of the faintest hint of a monition, that they should live for the grand final object pointed to by re-

ligion, but also, for the most part, of all consideration of the attainment of a reputable condition and character in life. The creature of so many faculties, and entering on an endless career, is seen in the predicament of snatching, as its utmost reach of purpose, at the low amusements and vices of each passing day; and cursing its privations and tasks, and often also the sharers of those privations, and the exactors of those tasks.

When these are grown up into the mass of mature population, what will it be, as far as their quality shall go toward constituting the quality of the whole? Alas! it will be, to that extent, just a continuation of the ignorance, debasement, and misery, so conspicuous in the bulk of the people now. And to *what* extent? Calculate that from the unquestionable fact, that hundreds of thousands of the human beings in our land, between the ages, say, of eight and sixteen, are at this hour thus abandoned to go forward into life at random, as to the use they shall make of it,—(if, indeed, it can be said to be at random, when there is strong tendency and temptation to evil, and no discipline to good.) Looking at this proportion, does any one think there will be, on the whole, wisdom and virtue enough in the community to render this black infusion imperceptible or innoxious?

But are we accounting it absolutely inevitable that the sequel must be in full proportion to this present fact,—*must* be every thing that this

fact threatens, and *can* lead to,—as we should behold persons carried down in a mighty torrent, where all interposition is impossible, or as the Turks look at the progress of a conflagration or a plague? It is in order to “frustrate the tokens” of such melancholy divination, to arrest something of what a destructive power is in the act of carrying away, to make the evil spirit find, in the next stages of his march, that all his enlisted host have not followed him, and to quell somewhat of the triumph of his boast, “my name is Legion, for we are many;”—it is for this that the friends of improvement, and of mankind, are called upon for efforts beyond those which are requisite for maintaining, in its present extent of operation, the system of expedients for instructing, before it be too late, the yet youthful tribe.

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## SECTION II.

*Uncultivated minds abandoned to seek their pleasures  
in sensual gratification.*

ANOTHER obvious circumstance in the state of the untaught class is, that they are abandoned, in a direct unqualified manner, to seek their chief good in sensual gratification. The very narrow scope to which their condition limits them in the pursuit of this, will not prevent its being to them the most desirable thing in existence, since for any other mode of happiness

their scope is narrower still. By the very constitution of the human nature, the mind seems half to belong to the senses, it is so shut within them, affected by them, dependent on them, and impotent but through their medium. And while, by this necessary hold which they have on what would call itself a spiritual being, they absolutely will engross to themselves, as of clear right, a large share of its interest and exercise, they will strive to possess themselves of the other half too. And they will have it, if it has not been carefully otherwise claimed and preoccupied. And when the senses have thus usurped the whole mind for their service, how will you get any of it back? Try, if you will, whether this is a thing so easy to be done. Present to the minds, so engrossed with the desires of the senses, that their main action is but in these desires and the consideration how to fulfil them,—offer to their view nobler objects, which are appropriate to the spiritual being, and observe whether that being promptly shews a sensibility to the worthier objects, as congenial to its nature, and, obsequious to the new attraction, disengages itself from what has wholly absorbed it.

Nor would we require that the experiment be made by presenting something of a precisely religious nature, to which there is an innate aversion for religion's own sake, separately from its being an intellectual thing,—an aversion even though the mental faculties be cultivated. It may be made with something that

ought to have power to please the mind as simply a being of intelligence, imagination, and sentiment, a pleasure which may not be altogether foreign, in some of its modes, to the senses themselves; as when, for instance, it is to be imparted by something fine or grand in the natural world, or in the works of art. Let this refined solicitation be addressed to the grossly uncultivated, in competition with some low indulgence, with the means, for example, of gluttony and inebriation. See how the subjects of your experiment, (intellectual and moral natures though they are,) answer to these respective offered gratifications. Observe how these more dignified attractives encounter and overpower the meaner, and reclaim the usurped debased spirit. Or rather, observe whether they can avail, for more than an instant, so much as to divide its attention. But indeed you can foresee the result so well, that you may spare the labor. Still less could you deem it to be of the nature of an experiment, (which implies uncertainty,) to make the attempt with ideal forms of nobleness or beauty, with intellectual, poetical, or moral captivations.

Yet this addiction to sensuality, beyond all competition of worthier modes and means of interest, does not altogether refuse to admit of some division and diversion of the vulgar feelings, in favor of some things of a more mental character, provided they be vice. A man so neglected in his youth that he can hardly spell the names of Alexander, Cæsar, or Bonaparte,

may feel the strong incitement of ambition.— This, instead of raising him, may only propel him forward, so to speak, on the level of his debased condition and society, and it is a favorable supposition that makes him “the best wrestler on the green,” or a manful pugilist; for it is probable his grand delight may be, to indulge himself in an oppressive insolent arrogance toward such as are unable to maintain a strife with him on terms of fair rivalry, making his will the law to all whom he can force or frighten into submission.

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### SECTION III.

*The devotion to sensuality and coarse pleasures a ready introduction to habits of cruelty.*

THE devotement to coarse sensuality admits, again, of occasional competition and suspension in behalf of the pleasures of cruelty; a flagrant characteristic, generally, of uncultivated degraded human creatures, both where the whole community consists of such, as in barbarous and savage tribes, and where they form a large portion of it, as in this country. It is hardly worth while to put in words, the acknowledgment of the obvious and odious fact, that a considerable share of mental attainment is sometimes inefficient to extinguish this infernal principle of human nature, by which it is gratifying to witness and inflict suffering, even separately.



from any prompting of revenge. All of us have seen examples of this inefficiency. But why do we regard them as peculiarly hateful, and brand them with the most intense reprobation, but *because* it is judged the fair and natural tendency of mental cultivation to repress that principle, insomuch that a surpassing virulence of depravity is evinced by the failure of that discipline to produce this effect? But then, think of that discipline being almost wholly withheld, so that the ordinary, and the extraordinary, degrees of this execrable propensity may go into action in their unmitigated malignity.

And such a consequence of the absence of that discipline, is manifest in the lower portion of our self-extolled community; notwithstanding a diminution, which the progress of education and religion has effected, in certain of the once most favorite and customary practices of cruelty. These very practices, nevertheless, still keep their ground in some of the more heathenish parts of the country; and if it were possible, that the more improved notions and taste of the more respectable classes could admit of any countenance being given to their revival, in the more civilized parts, it would be found that even there too a large portion of the people is, to this hour, left in a disposition which would welcome the return of savage exhibitions. It may be, that some of the most atrocious forms and degrees of cruelty would hardly please the greater number of them; for there have been instances in which an English

populace has shewn indignation at extreme and *unaccustomed* perpetrations of this kind, even to the extent of cruelly revenging them. Perhaps not many would be delighted with such scenes as those which, in the *Place de Greve*, used to be a gratification to a multitude of all ranks of the Parisians. But how many odious facts, characteristic of our people, have come under every one's observation.

Who has not seen numerous instances of the delight with which advantage is taken of weakness or simplicity, to practise upon them some sly mischief, or inflict some open mortification; and of the unrepressed glee with which many spectators can witness or abet the malice? And if, in such a case, an indignant observer has hazarded a remark or expostulation to any of them, the full stare, and the quickly succeeding laugh and retort of brutal scorn, has thrown open to his revolting sight the state of the recess within, where the moral sentiments are; and shewn how much the perceptions and notions had been indebted to the cares of the instructor. Could he help thinking what was deserved somewhere, by individuals or by the local community collectively, for suffering a being to grow up to quite or nearly the complete dimensions and features of manhood, with so vile a thing in it in substitution for what a soul should be? We need not remark, what every one has noticed, how much the vulgar are amused by seeing vexatious or injurious incidents, (if only not quite disastrous or tragical

ones,) befalling persons against whom they can have no resentment; how ferocious often their temper and means of revenge when they *have* causes of resentment; or how intensely delighted, in company, it is true, with many that are called their betters, in beholding several of their fellow-mortals, whether in anger or athletic competition, covering each other with bruises, deformity, and blood.

Our institutions, however, protect, in some considerable degree, man against man, as being framed in a knowledge of what would else become of the community. But observe a moment what are the dispositions of the vulgar as indulged, and with little preventive interference of those institutions, on the inferior animals. To a large proportion of the class it is, in their youth at least, one of the most vivid exhilarations to witness the terrors and anguish of living beings. If there is heard at a distance a howl that strikes you as almost infernal, one of your first conjectures in explanation would be, that a company of rationals may be witnessing the writhings, agonies and cries, of some animal struggling for escape or for life, while it is suffering the infliction, perhaps, of stones and kicks, or the application of the more directly fatal instruments of violence. If you hear in the clamor a sudden burst of fiercer exultation, you will surmise that just then the deadly blow or stab has been given. There is hardly an animal on the whole face of the country, of size enough, and enough within reach, to be a sufficient ob-

ject of attention, that would not be persecuted to death if no consideration of ownership interposed. The children of the uncultivated families are allowed, without a check, to exercise and improve the hateful disposition, on flies, young birds, and other feeble and harmless creatures; and they are actually encouraged to do it on what, under the denomination of vermin, are represented in the formal character of enemies, almost in such a sense as if a moral responsibility attached to them, and they were therefore not only to be destroyed as a nuisance, but deserving to be punished as offenders.

The destruction of sympathy, with the consequent carelessness of inflicting pain, combined inseparably, as this will probably always be, with the *love* of inflicting it, must be confirmed by the horrid spectacle of slaughter all over the land; a spectacle sought for gratification by the children and youth of the lower order; and in many places so publicly exhibited that they cannot well avoid seeing it, and its savage preliminary circumstances, sometimes directly wanton aggravations, perhaps in diabolic revenge of a struggle to resist or escape. Horrid, we call it because it is the infliction, on millions of sentient and innocent creatures every year, in what calls itself a humane and christian nation, of anguish perfectly unnecessary to the purpose. And it is a flagrant dishonor to such a country, and to the class that virtually, by rank, and formally, by official power, have presided over its economy, one generation after another,

that so hideous a fact should never, as far as we can remember to have heard, have moved even a thought of authoritative interference. An inconceivable daily amount of suffering, inflicted on unknown thousands of creatures, dying in slow anguish, when their death might be without pain as being instantaneous, is accounted no deformity in the social system, no incongruity with the national profession of a religion of which the essence is charity and mercy, nothing to sully the polish, or offend the refinement, of what will be seriously asserted to be, in its higher portions, a preeminently civilized and humanized community. Precious and well protected polish and refinement, and humanity, and christian civilization! to which it is a matter of easy indifference to know, that in the neighborhood of their abode, in whatever part of the whole country it may be, those tortures of butchery are, unnecessarily, inflicted, which could not be actually witnessed by persons in whom the pretension to these fine qualities is any thing better than affectation, without intolerable sensations of horror.

They are known to be inflicted, and yet this is a trifle not worth an effort toward innovation on inveterate custom, on the part of the influential classes; who may be far more worthily intent on changing the fashion of a dress, or possibly some new refinement in the cookery of the dead bodies of the victims. It is a matter far below legislative attention; while the powers of definition are exhausted under

the stupendous accumulation of regulations and interdictions for the good order of society. So hardened may the moral sense of a community be by universal and continual custom, that we are perfectly aware these very remarks will provoke the ridicule of many; and provoke it not at all the less that not one man of them can deny, or affect to deny, that the manner of the practise referred to steels and depraves, to a dreadful degree, a vast number of the human beings immediately employed in it, and, as a spectacle, powerfully contributes to confirm, in a much greater number, exactly that which it is, by eminence, the object of moral tuition to counteract—men's disposition to make light of all suffering but their own.

Now this one thing, exactly this one disposition, is the grand principle of moral depravity on earth,—this not caring for what is endured by other beings that are made liable to suffer. Estrangement from the Supreme Goodness, indeed, is the primary *cause*; but this very thing, this not caring for the sufferings of other beings, is the substantial practical essence of the iniquity which forms the curse and blast of this wretched world. And yet, we repeat it; a civilized and christian nation feels not the slightest self-displacency, for its allowing a certain unhappy but necessary part in the economy of the world to be executed, (by preference to a harmless method,) in a manner which probably does more to corroborate in the vulgar class this essential principle of depravity, than all the ex-

pedients of amelioration yet applied are doing to expel it.

Were it not vain and absurd to muse on supposable new principles in the constitution of the moral system, there is one that we might have been tempted to wish for, namely, that, of all suffering *unnecessarily* and wilfully inflicted by man on any class of sentient existence, a bitter intimation and participation might be conveyed to him through a mysterious law of nature, enforcing an avenging sympathy in severe proportion to that suffering, on all the men, be where they might, who were really accountable for its being inflicted.

After children and youth are trained to behold with something worse than hardened indifference, with a feeling of stimulant amusement, the sufferings of creatures dying for the service of man, it is no wonder if they are barbarous in their treatment of those that serve him by their life. And in fact nothing is more obvious as a prevailing, if we may not say general abomination, than the cruel habits of the lower class toward the laboring animals placed within their power. Of whatever quality and condition those animals may be, they have experienced enough of human nature; but generally its diabolic disposition is the most fully exercised on those that have been already the greatest sufferers. Meeting, wherever we go, with some of these starved, abused, exhausted figures, we shall not unfrequently meet with also another figure accompanying them,—that

of a ruffian, young or old, who with a visage of rage, and accents of hell, is wreaking his utmost malevolence on a wretched victim for being slow in performing, or quite failing to perform, what the excess of loading, and perhaps the feebleness of old age, have rendered difficult or absolutely impracticable; or for shrinking from an effort, to be made by a pressure on bleeding sores, or for losing the right direction through blindness, and that occasioned by hardship or savage violence. Many of the exacters of animal labor really seem to resent it as a kind of presumption and insult in the slave, that it should be any thing else than a machine, that the living being should betray under its toils that it suffers, that it is pained, weary, or reluctant. And if, by outrageous abuse, it should be excited to some manifestation of resentment, that is a crime for which the sufferer would be likely to incur such a fury and repetition of blows and lacerations, as to die on the spot, but for an interfering admonition of interest against destroying so much property, and losing so much service. When that service has utterly exhausted, often before the term of old age, the strength of those wretched animals, there awaits many of them a last short stage of still more remorseless cruelty, that in which it is become a doubtful thing whether the utmost efforts to which the emaciated diseased sinking frame can be forced by violence, are worth the trouble of that violence, the delays and accidents, and the expense of the



scanty supply of subsistence. As they must at all events very soon perish, it has ceased to be of any material consequence, on the score of interest, how grossly they may be abused; and their tormentors seem delighted with this release from all restraint on their dispositions. Those dispositions, as indulged in some instances, when the miserable creatures are formally consigned to be destroyed, cannot be much exceeded by any thing we can attribute to fiends. Some horrible exemplifications were adduced, not as single casual circumstances, but as usual practices, by a patriotic senator some years since, in endeavoring to obtain a legislative enactment in mitigation of the sufferings of the brute tribes. The design vanished to nothing in the House of Commons, under the effect of argument and ridicule from a person distinguished for intellectual cultivation; whose resistance was not only against that specific measure, but avowedly against the principle itself on which *any* measure of the same tendency could ever be founded.\*

If some advocate for things as they are in the lower classes, should be inclined to interpose here with a remark, that after *such* a reference, we have little right to ascribe to those classes, as if it were peculiarly one of their characteristics, the insensibility to the sufferings of the brute creation, and to number it formally among the results of the "lack of knowledge," we can

\* Lord Ereskine's memorable Bill, triumphantly scouted by the late Mr. Windham.

only reply, that however those of higher order may explode any attempt to make the most efficient authority of the nation bear repressively upon the evil, and however it may in other ways be abetted by them, it is, at any rate, in those inferior classes chiefly that the actual perpetrators of it are found. It is not a little to say in favor of cultivation, that it generally renders those who have the benefit of it incapable of practising, *themselves*, those cruelties which they are, indeed, far too little sensible how much they may be virtually countenancing, by some things which they do, and some things which they omit or refuse to do.

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#### SECTION IV.

*Uneducated persons have vague, limited, unsteady, and often perverted notions of right and wrong.*

If we did not trust to be indulged in an exemption, in a course of observations on such a subject, from any rigorous enforcement of the laws of order, we ought to have put nearer the beginning of these illustrations, from notorious fact, of the state of an uneducated people, that obvious characteristic—a rude, limited, unsteady, and often perverted, sense of right and wrong in general.

It is curious to look into a large volume of religious casuistry, for instance Bishop Taylor's

*Ductor Dubitantium*, and reflect what a conscience disciplined in the highest degree might be, and then observe what this regulator of the soul actually is where there has scarcely been any discipline of reason at all; and where there is no deep religious sentiment to rectify the perceptions, in the absence of an accurate intellectual discrimination of things. This sentiment being wanting, dispositions and conduct will not be taken account of according to the distinction between holiness and sin; and in the absence of instructed understanding, they cannot be brought to the test of the distinguishing law between propriety and turpitude; nor estimated upon any moral and comprehensive notion of utility. The evidence of all this is thick and close around us; so that every serious observer has been struck and almost shocked to observe, in what a very small degree conscience is a *necessary* attribute of the human creature; and how nearly a non-entity the whole system of moral principles may be, as to any recognition of it by an unadapted spirit. While that system is of a substance veritable and eternal, and stands forth in its exceeding breadth, marked with the strongest characters and prominences, it comes before these persons with hardly a shadow's virtue and reality, except in a few things of the grossest bulk, if we may so express it; their conscience having little sense of its vocation as respecting the evil of any thing done, or questioned whether to be done, in matters short of very palpable and flagrant

iniquity. It is therefore probable, they have considerably protracted exemptions from any interference of conscience at all; it is certain that they experience no such pertinacious attendance of it, as to feel habitually a monitory intimation, that without great thought and care they will inevitably do something wrong. But what may we judge and presage of the moral fortunes of a sojourner, of naturally corrupt propensity, in this bad world, who is not haunted, even to a degree of alarm, by this monitory sense, through every day of his life?

As he moves hither and thither on the scene, he has his perception of what is existing and passing on it; there are continually meeting his senses numberless moving and stationary objects; and among the latter there are many forms of limitation and interdiction; there are high walls, and gates, and fences, and brinks of torrents and precipices; in short, an order of things on all sides signifying to him, with more or less of menace,—Thus far and no further. And he is in a general way obsequious to this arrangement. We do not ordinarily expect to see him carelessly violating the most decided of the artificial lines of warning-off, nor daring across those dreadful ones of nature. But the while, as he is nearly destitute of that faculty of the soul which would perceive, (analogously to the effect of coming in contact with something charged with that element which causes the lightning,) the awful interceptive lines of that other arrangement which he is in the midst

of as a subject of the laws of God, we see with what insensibility he can transgress those prohibitory significations of the Almighty will, which are to devout men as lines streaming with an infinitely more formidable than material fire. And if we look toward his future course of life, the natural sequel foreseen is, that those lines of divine interdiction which he has not conscience to perceive as meant to deter him, he will seem, nevertheless, to have, through his corruptions, a strong recognition of, but in another quality—as temptations to attract him.

But to leave these terms of generality, and advert to a few particulars of illustration:—Recollect how commonly persons of the class described are found utterly violating truth, not in hard emergencies only, but as a habitual practice, and apparently without the slightest reluctance or compunction, their moral sense perfectly at rest under the accumulation of a thousand deliberate falsehoods. It is seen that by far the greatest proportion of them think it no harm to take little unjust advantages in their dealings, by deceptive management; and very many would take the greatest but for fear of temporal consequences; would do it, that is to say, without inquietude of conscience, in the proper sense. It is uniformly the testimony of experience, from persons who have had the most to transact with them and to employ them; that the indispensable rule of proceeding is to assume generally their want of principle, and

leave it to time and prolonged trial to establish rather slowly, the individual exceptions. Those unknowing admirers of human nature, or of English character, who are disposed to exclaim against this as an illiberal rule, may be recommended to act on what they will therefore deem a liberal one—at their cost.

In any species of wrong which has the salvo of custom in its favor, the most palpable iniquity of the practice shall not force any moral debate upon it on the mind. From recent accounts it appears, that the entire coast of our island is not even yet clear of those people called *wreckers*, who regarded it as all fair and right to appropriate whatever they could seize, of the lading of vessels cast ashore, including, often, what they could tear from the personal possession of the unfortunate beings who might just be escaping from the most dreadful peril. The cruelty we have so largely attributed to our English vulgar, never recoils on them in a compulsion to detest themselves. The habitual indulgence of the irascible, vexatious, and malicious tempers, to the plague or terror of all within reach, scarcely ever becomes a subject of judicial estimate, as a character viewed in the abstract, with then a reflection of that estimate on the man's own self to whom the character belongs. He reflects but just enough to say to himself that it is all right and deserved, and unavoidable too, for that he is unpardonably crossed and provoked; nor will he be driven from this self-approval, though it be evident to

every one else that the provocations are comparatively slight. The inconvenience and vexation incident to low libertinism, will make the offenders fret at themselves indeed for having been such fools, but it is in general with an extremely trifling degree of the sense of guilt.— Suggestions of reprehension, in even the discreetest terms, and from persons confessedly the best authorized to apply them, would most commonly be answered by a grinning defying carelessness, or abusive retort; instead of any betrayed signs of even an internal acknowledgment of deserving reproof. And while thus the censure of a fellow-mortal finds nothing in their minds to meet it, in the way of owning its justice, this stupid self-complacency is undisturbed also on the side toward heaven. A mere philosopher, that should make little account of religion, beyond its adaptedness to be applied to enforce and aggravate the sense of obligation with respect to rules of conduct, and would not, provided it may have this effect, care much about its truth or falsehood, might be disposed to assert, that the ignorant and debased part of the population, of this christian and protestant country, are but so much the worse for the ridance of some parts of the superstitions of former ages. There were admitted even in those times, he might say, *some* right injunctions of morality, considered as an external practical concern. These might be, and actually were, infixed in the popular mind as matter of conscience, by the great array of things

pretendedly divine and demi-divine which surrounded, and pressed closely and powerfully on, the mind of the multitude. Whereas now, when this great array is vanished, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to enforce moral principles and rules on the ignorant portion of the people with the mighty authority of Divine sanction; since they have not, in their exemption from the superstitions of their ancestors come under any solemn and commanding effect of the true idea of the Divine Majesty. And it is undeniable that this is the state of conscience among them. The vague faint notion, as they conceive it, of a being who is said to be the creator, governor, lawgiver, and judge, and who is somewhere in the sky, has not, to many of them, the smallest force of intimidation from evil, at least when they are in health and daylight. One of the large sting-armed insects of the air does not alarm them less. A certain transitory fearfulness, that sometimes comes upon them, points more to the Devil, and perhaps sometimes the ghosts of the dead, than to the Almighty. It may be, indeed, that this feeling is in its ultimate principle, if it were ever followed up so far, an acknowledgment of justice and power in God, reaching to wicked men through these hostile beings as a kind of instrumentality; but beyond these proximate objects of apprehension the idea of invisible spiritual power is inexpressibly vacant and feeble.



Even what notion they do conceive of the greatness of God tends little to restrain the dispositions to sin, or to impress the sense of guilt after it is committed. He is too great, they readily say, to mind the little matters that such creatures as we may do amiss; they can do *him* no harm. The idea, too, of his bounty, is so coarsely formed as to be a protection against all conscious reproach of ingratitude toward him:—he has made us to need all this that it is said he does for us; and it costs him nothing, it is no labor, and he is not the less rich; and besides, we have toil, and want, and plague enough, notwithstanding any thing that he gives.

It is probable this unhappiness of their condition, oftener than any other cause, brings God into their thoughts, and that as a being against whom they have a quarrel on account of it. And this strongly assists the reaction against whatever would enforce the sense of guilt on the conscience. When he has done so little for us, (something like this is the sentiment,) he cannot think it any such great matter if we *do* sometimes come a little short of his commands. There is no doubt that their recollections of him as a being to murmur against for their allotment, are more frequent, more dwelt upon, and with more of an excited feeling, than their recollections of him as a being whom they ought to have loved and served, but have offended against. The very idea of such offence, as one of the things which consti-

tute wickedness, is so slightly conceived, (because he is invisible, and because he is secure against all injury,) that if the thoughts of one of these persons *should*, by some rare occasion, be thrown into the direction of unwillingly seeing his own faults, it is probable his impiety would appear the most inconsiderable thing in the account, that he would easily forgive himself the negation of all acts and feelings of devotion toward the Supreme Being, and the countless multiplication of insults to him by profane language.

To conclude this part of the melancholy description,—it may be observed of the class in question, that they have but very little notion of guilt, or possible guilt, in any thing but external practice. That busy interior existence, which is the moral person, genuine and complete; the thoughts, imaginations, volitions; the motives, projects, deliberations, devices; the indulgence of the ideas of what they cannot or dare not practically realize,—all this, we have reason to believe, passes nearly exempted from jurisdiction, even of that feeble and undecisive kind which *may* occasionally attempt a little interference with their actions. They do indeed take such notice of the quality of these things within, as to be aware that some of them are not to be disclosed in their communications; which prudential caution has of course little to do with conscience, when the things so withheld are internally cherished in perfect disregard of the Omniscient Observer, and with:

hardly the faintest monition that the essence of the guilt is the same, with only a difference in degree, in intending or deliberately desiring an evil, and, in acting it.

It is not natural obtuseness of mental faculty that we are attributing, all this while, to the uneducated class of our people, in thus exposing the deplorable defectiveness of their discernment between right and wrong. If it were, there might arise somewhat of the consolation afforded in contemplating some of the very lowest of the savage tribes of mankind, by the idea that such outcasts of the rational nature must stand very nearly divested of accountableness, through absolute natural want of mind. But in the barbarians of our country we shall often observe a very competent, and now and then an abundant, share of native sense. We may see it evinced in respect to the very questions of morality, in cases where they are quite compelled, as will occasionally happen, to feel themselves brought within the cognizance of some plain principle of distinction between right and wrong. In such cases we have witnessed a sharpness and activity of intellect which have excited almost our admiration. What contrivance of deception, and artful evasion. What dexterity of quibble, and captious objection, and petty sophistry.—What vigilant observance how the plea in justification takes effect, and address in changing it if they perceive it is not the right one.—What quickness to avail themselves of any mis-

take, or apparent concession in the examiner or reprover. What readiness of resource for reply or subterfuge. What copious rhetoric in exaggeration of the cause which tempted to do wrong, or the great good hoped to be effected by the little deviation from the right,—a good surely enough to excuse so trifling an impropriety. What facility of placing between themselves and the censure, the recollected example of some good man who has been “over-taken in a fault.”

Here is mind, after all, we have been prompted to exclaim; mind educating itself to evil, in default of that discipline which should have educated it to good. How much of the wisdom of evil, (if we may be allowed the expression,) there is faculty enough in the neglected corrupt popular mass of this nation to attain, by the exercise into which the individual's mind is carried by its own bad impulse, with the advantage too of a most extensive co-operation. And how freely the advantage has always been conceded to each of these self-improvers in depraved sense, that he should have as great a number as he could desire of associates and co-operators; that no attempt should be made, in a strenuous manner, on a large scale, to diminish the immense tribe! Multitudes beyond calculation have been, through every period, abandoned to this destructive process of self-education, and to assist one another in it. Where then has been that character of parental guardianship, which seems to be ascribed when po-

ets, orators, and patriots, are inspired with tropes, and talk of England and her children? This imperial matron of their rhetoric seems to have little cared how much she might be disgraced in the larger portion of her progeny, or how little cause they might have to all eternity to remember her with gratitude. She has had far other concern about them, and employment for them, than that of their being taught the value of their spiritual nature, and carefully trained to be enlightened, good, and happy. Laws against crime, it is true, she has enacted for them in great plenty. She has also maintained public sabbath observances to remind them of religion, of which observances the reading of a Book of Sports was, at one period, long after her adoption of the reformation in religion, an indispensable part. But she might plainly see what all this did *not* accomplish. It was a glaring fact before her eyes, that a vast number of her children were brought up in a mental rudeness akin to that of Muscovite boors. She had most ample resources indeed for supplying the remedy; but, provided that the productions of the soil and the workshop were duly forthcoming, she thought it of no consequence, it should seem, that the operative hands belonged to degraded minds. And then, too, as at all times, her lofty ambition destined a good proportion of them to the consumption of martial service, she perhaps judged that the less they were trained to think, the more fit they might be to be actuated mechanically, as an in-

strument of blind impetuous force. Or perhaps she thought it would be rather an inconsistency, to be making much of the inner existence of a thing which was to be so unceremoniously cut or dashed to pieces. And besides, a certain measure of instruction to think, especially if consisting, in a considerable part, of the inculcation of religion, might have done something to disturb that Mahomedan notion, which she was by no means desirous to expel from her fleets and armies, that death for "king and country" clears off all accounts for sin.

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#### SECTION V.

*General effects of the want of knowledge in a community, and the facility with which a vacant mind receives wrong impressions.*

LET us direct our attention a little while to the effects of the privation of knowledge, as they may be seen displayed in the several parts of the economy of life, in the uneducated portion of the community. Observe those people in their daily occupations. None of us need to be told that, of the prodigious diversity of manual employments, some consist of, or include, operations of such minuteness or complexity, and so much demanding nicety, arrangement, or combination, as to necessitate the constant and

almost entire attention of the mind; nor that nearly all of them must require its full attention at times, at particular stages, changes, and adjustments, of the work. We give this its full weight, in prevention of any extravagant notion of how much it is possible to think of other things during the working time. It is however to be recollected, that persons of a class superior to the numerous one we have in view, take the chief share of the departments of operation which require the most of mental effort,—those which demand extreme precision, or inventive contrivance, or taste, or scientific skill. We may also take into the account of the allotment of employments to the uncultivated multitude, how much facility is acquired by habit; how much use there is of instrumental mechanism, (the grand exempter from the responsibility that would lie on the mind,) and how merely general and very slight an attention is exacted, in the ordinary course of some of the occupations. These things being considered, we may venture perhaps to assume, on an average of those employments, that the persons engaged in them might be, as much at least as one third part of the time, without detriment to the manual performance, giving the thoughts to other things with attention enough for interest and improvement. This is particularly true of the plainer parts of the labors of agriculture.

But as the case at present is, what does become, during such portion of the time, of the

ethereal essence which inhabits the corporeal laborer, this spirit created for thought, knowledge, and immortality? Can we without regret know, that in very many of the persons in the situations supposed, it suffers a dull absorption, subsides into the mere physical nature, is sunk and sleeping in the animal warmth and functions, and lulled and rocked, as it were, in its lethargy, by the bodily movements in the works which it is not necessary for it to keep habitually awake to direct? In being, at the same time, under a *general* responsibility for their right execution, it has a kind of license and protection for this somnolency. The employment is *something to be minded*, though but now and then requiring a full attention, and therefore it seems an exemption from the claim to mind any thing else; as a person retained for some service which requires but occasionally an active exercise, will excuse the indolence which declines taking in hand, as he very properly might, any other business in the intervals, under the pretext that he has his appointment; and so, when not under the immediate calls of that appointment, he will go to sleep, even in the full light of day, with an easy conscience.

Let not any such folly be imputed to us here, as that we are fancying the laboring class, in this age and country, to be placed under a moderate demand of their thoughts for their immediate necessities. Many of them experience, amidst their employment, a severe arrest of



those thoughts which the employment itself would leave free. The lot of that class seems to be placed in a melancholy disproportion, between what *must* be given to the cares and toils for mere subsistence, and what *can*, at most, be given to the interests of the noble part of their nature. It is a strange and sad spectacle, to behold so many myriads of spiritual beings under the doom, of consuming the greatest share of their energy and time in just supporting so many bodies in the struggle to live; a struggle, not in the general sense merely, that the body must, by the laws of our nature, compel to the concern of its life and well-being a great deal of the mind's attention and activity; nor in the general sense merely of that sentence, "in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread;" but in the more special sense, that through the adventitious effect of some dreadful disorder of the social economy in this part of the world, at this time, the utmost that the exertions of the body and mind together can do, but barely suffices, in some instances does not suffice, for the mere protraction of life,—comfortable life being altogether out of the question. The course of the administration of the civilized states, and the recent dire combustion into which they have almost unanimously rushed, as in emulation which of them should with the least reserve, and with the most desperate rapidity, annihilate the resources which should have been for the subsistence and competence of their people, have resulted in such destitution and mis-

ery as were never suffered in this country before, except as immediately inflicted by the local visitation of some awful calamity. The state of very many of our people, at this hour, is nearly what might be conceived as the consequence of a failure of the accustomed produce of the earth. Not a few might give the image of families driven out into a desert, from abodes destroyed in the ravage of war.

We were wishing to introduce a suggestion, how the laboring people's thoughts might be partly employed, during their daily task, and consistently with industry and good workmanship. Alas! what a state of things is exhibited where the very name of industry, the virtue universally honored, the topic of so many human and divine inculecations, cannot be spoken without offering a bitter insult; where the heavy toil, denounced on man for his transgression, in the same sentence as death, is in vain implored as the greatest possible privilege; or thought of in despair, as a blessing too great to be attainable; and when the reply of the artizan, to an unwitting admonition, that even amidst his work, he might have some freedom for useful thinking, may be, "Thinking! I have no work to confine my thinking; I may, for that, employ it all on other subjects; but those subjects are, whether I please or not, the plenty and luxury in which many creatures of the same kind as myself are rioting, and the starvation which I and my family are suffering."

We hope in Providence, more than in any wisdom shewn by men, that this melancholy state of things will be alleviated, otherwise than by the extinction of a considerable portion of suffering humanity. We trust to see the time, when a christian monitor shall no longer be silenced by the apprehension of such a reply, when he would suggest to the humble class that they should strive against being reduced to mere machines amidst their manual employments; that it is miserable to have the whole mental existence shrunk and shrivelled as it were to the breadth of the material they are working upon; that the noble interior agent, which lends itself to maintain the external activity, and direct the operations required of the bodily powers for the body's welfare, has eminently a right and claim to have employments on its own account, during such parts of those operations as do not of necessity monopolize its attention. It has a right to take its privilege, by a rule analogous to what would be applicable, in the case of a man of great general intelligence or science having the charge of directing a common workman, in a business of no considerable novelty or difficulty, and who would interfere when really required; but would not give up all other thought and employment to be a constant mere looker-on, during operations of so ordinary a nature that he could not really fix his attention on them.

But how is the mind of the laborer or artisan to be delivered from the blank and stupified

state, during the parts of his employment that do not necessarily engross his thoughts? How, but by its having within some store of subjects for thought; in a word, by the possession of knowledge? How can it be sensibly alive and active, when it is placed fully and decidedly out of communication with all things that are friendly to intellectual life, all things that apply a beneficent stimulus to the faculties, all things, of this world or another, that are the most inviting or commanding to thought and emotion? We can imagine this ill-fated spirit, thus detached from all vital connexion, secluded from the whole universe, and enclosed as by a wall of incarceration,—we can imagine it sometimes moved with an indistinct longing for its appropriate interests; and going round and round by this dark dead wall, to seek for any spot where there might be a chance of escape, or any crevice where a living element for the soul transpires; and then, as feeling it all in vain, relapsing into inertion and slumber. Some ignorant minds have instinctive impulses of this kind; though many, it is possible, are so deeply stupefied as to be habitually much at ease. But let them have received, in their youth and progressively afterwards, a considerable measure of interesting information, respecting, for instance, the many striking objects on the globe they inhabit, the memorable events of past ages, the origin and uses of remarkable works within their view, remaining from ancient times; the causes of effects and phenomena familiar to

their observation as now unintelligible facts; the prospects of man, from the relation he stands in to time and eternity, and God, explained by the great principles and facts of religion, and that religion declared by a direct revelation from heaven. Let there be fixed in their minds so many ideas of these kinds, as might be imparted by a comparatively humble education, (one quite compatible with the destination to a life of ordinary employment,) and even involuntarily the thoughts would often recur to these subjects, in those moments and hours when the manual occupation can, and actually will, be prosecuted with but little of exclusive attention. Slight incidents, casual expressions, would sometimes suggest these subjects; by association they would suggest one another. The mere re-action of a somewhat cultivated spirit against invading dulness, might recall some of the more amusing and elating ones; and they would fall like a gleam of sunshine on the imagination. An emotion of conscience, a self-reflection, an occurring question of duty, a monitory sensation of defective health, would sometimes point to the serious and solemn ones. The mind might thus go a great way, to recreate or profit itself, and, on coming back again, find all safe in the process of the field or the loom. The man would thus come from these processes with more than the bare earnings to set against the fatigue. There would thus be scattered some appearances to entertain, and some sources and productions to re-

fresh, over what were else a dead and barren flat of existence.

There is no romancing in all this; we have known instances of its verification to a very pleasing and exemplary extent. We have heard persons of the class in question tell of the exhilarating imaginations, or solemn reflections, which, through the reminiscences of what they had read in youth or more advanced years, had visited their minds; and put them as it were in communication for a while with diversified, remote, and elevated objects, while in their humble employments under the open sky or the domestic roof. And is not this, (if it be true, after all, that the intellectual immortal nature is by emphasis the man,) is not this vastly better than that this mind should lie nearly as dormant, during the laborer's hours of business, as his attendant of the canine species shall be sometimes seen to do in the corner of the field where he is at work?

But perhaps it will be said, that the minds of the uncultivated order are not generally in this state of utter inanity during their common employments; but are often awake and busy enough in recollections, fancies, projects, and the tempers appropriate; and that they abundantly shew this when they stop sometimes in their work to talk; or talk as they are proceeding in it. So much the stronger, we answer, the argument for supplying them with knowledge; for it were better their mental being were sunk in lethargy, than busy among the

imagined transactions, the wishes, and the schemings, which will be the most likely to occupy the faculties of persons abandoned to ignorance, vulgarity, and therefore probably to vice.

We may add to the representation, the manner in which they spend the part of their time not required to be devoted to the regular, nor to the occasional, exercise of their industry. It is too true that many of them may plead as they do, that excepting Sunday, the utmost suspension of toil allowed them is little more than what, being caused by weariness, is absolutely needed for complete repose. This is particularly the case of the females, especially those who have the chief cares of the family. Nevertheless, it is within our constant observation that a considerable proportion of the men, a large one of the younger men, do in fact, include, for substance, their manual employments within such limits of time, as often to leave several hours in the day to be spent nearly as they please. And in what manner, for the most part, is this precious time expended by those of no mental cultivation? It is very true, again, that in many departments of labor, a diligent exertion during even this limited space of the day, occasions such a degree of lassitude and heaviness as to render it almost inevitable, especially in certain seasons of the year, to surrender some moments of the spare time, beyond what is necessary for taking the supports of life, to a kind of listless subsidence of all the powers, corpo-

real and mental. But after all these allowances fully conceded, a great proportion of the class under contemplation have in some days several hours, and in the whole six days of the week, on an average of the year, many hours, to be given, as they choose, to useful purposes or to waste; and again we ask, where the mind has been left waste how is that time mostly expended?

If the persons are of a phlegmatic temperament, we shall often see them just simply annihilating those portions of time. They will for an hour, or for hours together, if not disturbed by some cause from without, sit on a bench, or lie down on a bank of hillock, or lean on a wall, or fill the fire-side chair, yielded up to utter vacancy and torpor, not asleep perhaps, but more exempt from mental excitement than if they were; since the dreams, that would probably visit their slumbers, would most certainly be a more lively train of ideas than any they have awake. Of a piece with this, is the habit, among many of this order of people, of giving formally to sleep as much as one third part, sometimes considerably more, of the twenty-four hours. Certainly there is a mournful number of cases in which infirmity, care, fatigue, and the comfortlessness and penury of the humble dwelling, effectually plead for a large allowance of this balm of oblivion. But very many surrender themselves to this excess from destitution of any thing to keep their minds awake, especially in the evenings



of the winter. What a contrast is here suggested to the imagination of those who have read Dr. Henderson's, and other recent descriptions, of the habits of the people of Iceland!

These, however, are their most harmless modes of wasting the time. For while we might think of the many hours merged by them in apathy and needless sleep, with a wish that those hours could be recovered to the account of their existence, we might well think with a wish that the hours could be struck out of it which they may sometimes give, instead, to conversation; in parties where ignorance, coarse vulgarity, and profaneness, are to support the dialogue on topics the most to their taste; always including, as the most welcome to that taste, the depravities and scandals of the neighborhood; while all the reproach and ridicule, expended with the warmest good will on those depravities, have uniformly the strange result, of making the censors the less disinclined themselves to practise them, and only a little better instructed how to do it with impunity. In many instances there is the additional mischief, that these assemblings for corrupt communication find their resort at the public house, where intemperance and ribaldry may season each other, if the pecuniary means can be afforded, even at the cost of distress at home.—But short of this depravity, the worthlessness of the communications of a number of grossly ignorant beings is easy to be imagined, besides

that most of us have been made judges of their quality by numberless occasions of unavoidably hearing samples of them.

In the finer seasons of the year, much of these leisure spaces of time can be expended out of doors; and we have still only to refer each one to his own observation of the account to which they are turned, in the lives of beings whose lot allows but so contracted a portion of time to be, at the best, applied directly to the highest purposes of life.—Here the hater of all such schemes of improvement, as would threaten to turn the lower order into what that hater may probably call Methodists, in other words, into rational creatures and christians, comes in with a ready cant of humanity and commiseration. And why, he says, with an affected indignation of philanthropy, why should not the poor creatures enjoy a little fresh air and cheerful sunshine, and have a chance for keeping their health, confined as many of them are, for the greatest part of their time, in narrow squalid rooms, unwholesome shops, or one kind or other of disagreeable places and employments? Very true, we answer; and why should they not be collected in groups by the road side, in readiness for anything that, in passing, may furnish occasions for gross jocularity, practising some impertinence, or uttering some jeering scurrility, at the expense of persons going by; shouting with laughter at the effect of the sport, and inspiriting it all with infernal imprecations? Or why should

they not form a little conventicle for cursing, blaspheming, and blackguard obstreperousness in the street, about the entrance of one of the haunts of intoxication; where they are perfectly safe from that far worse mischief of a gloomy fanaticism, with which they might have been smitten if seduced to frequent the meeting-house twenty paces off? Or why should not the children, growing into the stage called youth, be turned loose through the lanes, roads, and fields, to form a brawling impudent rabble, trained by their association to every low vice, and ambitiously emulating, in voice, visage, and manners, the drabs and ruffians of maturer growth? Or why should not the young men and women collect in clusters, or range about or beyond the neighborhood in bands, for revel, frolic, and all kinds of coarse mirth, to come back late at night to quarrel with their wretched elders, who perhaps envy them their capacity for such wild gaieties and strollings, while rating them for their disorderly habits? We say, where can be the harm of all this? What reasonable and benevolent man would think of making any objection to it? Reasonable and benevolent,—for these are qualities expressly boasted by the opposers of an improved education of the people, while in such opposition they virtually avow their approbation of all that we have here described.

We have allowed most fully the plea of how little time, *comparatively*, could be afforded by the lower classes from their indispensable em-

ployments to the concern of mental improvement; and also that of the fatigue consequent on them, and causing a temporary incapacity of effort in any other way. But here we see that, nevertheless, time, strength, and wakefulness, and spring and spirit for exertion, are found for a vast deal of busy diversion.

This is the manner in which the spare time of the week-days goes to waste, and worse; but the Sunday is welcomed as giving scope for the same things on a larger scale. It is very striking to consider, that several millions, we may safely assert, of our English people, come to what should be years of discretion, are almost completely exempt from any manner of conscience respecting this seventh part of time, not merely as to any required consecration of it to religion, but as to its being under any claim or of any worth at all, otherwise than for amusement. It is actually regarded by them as a section of time far less under obligation than any other. They take it as so absolutely at their free disposal, by a right so exclusively vested in their taste and will, that a demand made even in behalf of their own most important interests is contemptuously repelled as an interference. If the idea occurs at all of claims which they have heard that God should make on the hours, it is dismissed with the thought that it really cannot signify to him how creatures condemned by his appointment to toil all the rest of the week, may wish to spend this one day, on which the secular taskmaster

manumits them, and He, the spiritual one, might surely do as much. An immense number pay no attention whatever to any sort of religious worship; and multitudes of those that do afford an hour to such an observance, do it either as a mode of amusement, or by way of taking a license of exemption from any further accountableness as to the manner in which they may like to spend the day. It is the natural consequence of all this, that there is more folly, if not more crime, committed on this than on all the other six days together.

Thus man, at least *ignorant* man, is unfit to be trusted with any thing under heaven; since a remarkable appointment for raising the general tenor of moral existence, has, with these persons, the effect of sinking it. Those favored portions of their time, interposed at regular and frequent intervals, with a mark of the divine benediction upon them, might, without any approach toward the punctilious and burdensome austerity in the manner of improving them which some good men in former times enjoined, be the means of diffusing a degree of light and dignity over the whole series of their days; whereas an unhappily large number of those of our people who are now arrived near the close of that long series, have to look back on the Sundays as having been made, in a peculiar manner, the dishonor and bane of their life. One of the most melancholy views in which a human being can be presented to us, is when we behold a man of perhaps seventy

years sunk in the gross stupidity of an almost total ignorance of all the most momentous subjects, and reflect that more than three thousand Sundays have passed over him, of which every hour successively *has been his time*, since he came to an age of some natural capacity for mental exercise. Perhaps some compassionate friend may have been pleading in his behalf—Alas! what opportunity, what time, has the poor mortal ever had? His lot has been to labor hard through the week, throughout almost his whole life. Yes, we answer, but he has had three thousand Sundays; what would not even the most moderate improvement of so immense a quantity of time have done for him? But the ill-fated man, (perhaps rejoins the commiserating pleader,) had no advantages of education, had nothing in any sense deserving that name. There, we reply, you strike the mark. Sundays are of no practical value, nor bibles, nor the enlarged knowledge of the age, nor heaven nor earth, to beings brought up in estrangement from all right discipline of their minds. And therefore we are pleading for the schemes and institutions which will not *let* human beings be thus brought up.

In so pleading, we can happily appeal to a conspicuous fact in evidence that the intellectual and religious culture, in the introductory stages of life, tends to secure that the persons so trained shall be, after they are grown up, much more sensible than the uncultivated, of the value of means and opportunities, and

more disposed to avail themselves of them. Look at the numbers now attending, and with a deportment not unsuitable, public worship and instruction, as compared with what the proportion is remembered or recorded to have been half a century since, or any time previous to the great exertions of benevolence, to save the children of the inferior classes from preserving the likeness of the minds of their forefathers.

It can be testified also, by persons whose observation has been the longest in the habit of following children and youth from the instruction of the school institutions into mature life, that in a gratifying number of instances, they have been seen permanently retaining too much love of improvement, and too much of the habit of an useful employment of their minds, to sink, in their ordinary daily occupations, into that wretched inanity we were representing; or to consume the free intervals of time in the listlessness, or worthless gabble, or vain sports, of which their neighbors furnished plenty of example and temptation.

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#### SECTION VI.

*Gross ignorance produces a degraded state of domestic society.*

THESE representations have partly included, what we may yet specify distinctly as one of

the unhappy effects of gross ignorance—a *degraded state of domestic society*.

That form of community is seen to have a peculiar tendency to fall below the level of complacent and dignified association, and strongly requires the intervention of every preventive and corrective cause.—Human beings cannot be together without having constantly, though it may be somewhat indistinctly, a certain sense of claiming from one another something meant and suited to please. This is fully recognized when strangers fall into company for a few hours. The members of the domestic society have each this same feeling that the others should please them; but their passing so very large a portion of their time together is adverse to their *giving* what they thus mutually claim. To be through so long a time maintaining a study and effort to please one another, would be too long and costly a suspension of their individual wills, tastes, and humors; for to please each one himself, rather than others, is the predominant principle of human feeling after all. Hence the absence, in domestic society, of the attentiveness, the tone of civility, the habit of little concessions and accommodations, voluntary and supernumerary, which are observable in the temporary intercourse of acquaintance, and, as we said, of strangers. Where the claim is perpetual, each one seems prompted by a natural impulse to a manner of deportment which has the ungraciousness of asserting his freedom.



And then consider, in so close a kind of community, what near and intimate witnesses they are of all one another's faults, weaknesses, tempers, perversities; of whatever is offensive in manner, or unseemly in habit; of all the irksome, humiliating, or even ludicrous, circumstances and situations. And also, in this close association, the bad moods, the strifes, and resentments, are pressed into immediate lasting corrosive contact with whatever should be the most vital to social happiness. If there be, into the account, the wants, anxieties, and vexations of severe poverty, they will generally aggravate all that is destructive to domestic complacency and decorum.

Now add gross ignorance to all this, and see what the picture will be. How many families we have seen where the parents were only the older and stronger animals than their children, whom they could teach nothing but the methods and tasks of labor. They naturally could not be the mere companions, for alternate play and quarrel, of their children, and were disqualified by mental rudeness to be their respected guardians. There were about them these young and rising forms, containing the inextinguishable principle, which was capable of entering on an endless progression of wisdom, goodness, and happiness; needing numberless suggestions, explanations, admonitions, and brief reasonings, and a training to follow the thoughts of written instruction. But nothing of all this from the parental mind. Their case was as

hopeless for receiving this benefit, as the condition, for physical nutriment, of infants attempting to draw it, (we have heard of so affecting and mournful a fact,) from the breast of a dead parent. These unhappy heads of families possessed no resources for engaging and occupying, for at once amusing and instructing, the younger minds; no descriptions of the most wonderful objects, or narratives of the most memorable events, to set, for superior attraction, against the idle stories of the neighborhood; no assemblage of admirable examples, from the sacred or other records of human character, to give a beautiful real form to virtue and religion, and promote an aversion to base companionship.

Requirement and prohibition must be a part of the family economy, perpetually in operation of course; and in such examples we have seen the family government exercised, or attempted to be exercised, in the roughest barest shape of will and menace, with no aptitude or means of imparting to injunction and censure a convincing and persuasive quality. Not that the seniors should allow their government to be placed on such a ground, that, in every thing they enforce or forbid, they may be liable to have their reasons demanded by the children. Far from it; but at the same time, it should not be obvious to the natural shrewdness of the children that their domestic authorities really *have* no reasons better than an obstinate or capricious will, so that they should plainly perceive

there is no reason for their submission but the necessity imposed by their dependence. But this must often be the unfortunate case in such families.

Now imagine a week, month, or year, of the intercourse in such a domestic society, the course of talk, the mutual manners, and the progress of mind and character; where there is a sense of drudgery approaching to that of slavery, in the unrelenting necessity of labor; where there is none of the interest of imparting knowledge or receiving it, or of reciprocating knowledge that has been imparted and received; where there is not an acre, if we might express it so, of intellectual space around them, clear of the thick universal fog of ignorance; where, especially, the luminaries of the spiritual heaven, the attributes of the Almighty, the grand phenomenon of redeeming mediation, the solemn realities of a future state and another world, are totally obscured in that shade; where the conscience and the discriminations of duty are dull and indistinct, from the youngest to the oldest; where there is no genuine respect felt or shewn on the one side, nor affection unmingled with vulgar petulance and harshness, expressed perhaps in wicked imprecations, on the other; where a mutual coarseness of manners and language has the effect, without their being aware of it as a cause, of debasing their worth in one another's esteem, all round; and where, notwithstanding all, they absolutely must pass a great deal of

time together, to converse, and to display their dispositions toward one another, and exemplify what the primary relations of life are reduced to, when divested of all that is to give them dignity, endearment, and conduciveness to the highest advantage of existence.

Home has but little to please the young members of such a family, and a great deal to make them eager to escape out of the house; which is also a welcome riddance to the elder persons, when it is not in neglect or refusal to perform the allotments of labor. So little is the feeling of a peaceful cordiality created among them by their seeing one another all within the habitation, that, not unfrequently, the passer-by may learn the fact of their collective number being there, from the sound of a low strife of mingled voices, some of them betraying youth replying in anger or contempt to maturity or age. It is wretched to see how early this liberty is boldly taken. As the children perceive nothing in the *minds* of their parents that should awe them into deference, the most important difference left between them is that of physical strength. The children, if of hardy disposition, to which they are perhaps trained in battles with their juvenile rivals, soon shew a certain degree of daring against this superior strength. And as the difference lessens, and by the time it has nearly ceased, what is so natural as that they should assume equality, in manners and in following their own will? But equality assumed where there should be

subordination, inevitably involves contempt toward the party against whose claim it is asserted.

The relative condition of such parents as they sink in old age, is most deplorable. And all that has preceded leads, by a natural course, to that consequence which we have sometimes beheld, with feelings emphatically gloomy,—the almost perfect indifference with which the descendants, and a few other near relatives, of a poor old man of this class, could consign him to the grave. A human being was gone out of the world, a being whom they had been near all their lives, some of them sustained in their childhood by his labors, and yet not one heart, at any one moment, felt the sentiment—I have lost——. They never could regard him with respect, and their miserable education had not taught them humanity enough to regard him in his declining days as an object of pity. Some decency of attention was perhaps shewn him, or perhaps not, in his last hours. His being become a dead, instead of a living man, was a burden taken off; and the insensibility and levity, somewhat disturbed and repressed at the sight of his expiring struggle, and of his being lowered into the grave, recovered, by the day after his interment, if not on the very same evening, their accustomed tone, never more to be interrupted by the effect of any thought of him. It is a very melancholy spectacle to see an ignorant thoughtless father, surrounded by his untaught children, at the sight of whom our thought thus silently accosts him, The event

which will take you finally from among them, perhaps after forty or fifty years of intercourse with them, will leave no more impression on their affections, than the cutting down of a decayed old tree in the neighborhood of your habitation.

There are instances, of rare occurrence, in which the dark and thoughtless spirit of the head of such a family is, late in life, far too late for their welfare, roused by an influence from heaven into earnest thoughtfulness and conscience. When the sun thus breaks out in radiance toward the close of his gloomy day, and when, in the energy of this new life, he puts forth the best efforts of his untaught soul to acquire a little divine knowledge, to be a lamp to him in entering ere long the shades of death, with what bitter regrets he looks back to the period when a number of human beings, now scattered from him, and here and there pursuing their course in careless ignorance, were growing up, under his roof, within his charge, but in utter estrangement from all discipline of wisdom. And most gladly would he lay down his life to make the impression, on the now harder state of their minds, which instruction might have been rendered efficacious to make upon them in that early season.

Another thing is to be added, to this representation of the evils attendant on an uncultivated state of the people, namely—that this mental rudeness puts them decidedly out of communication with the superior and cultivated

classes. It does so to a degree most pernicious to their own and the general welfare. It is of great consequence to a nation, that whatever there is in it of dignity and refinement, of liberalized feeling and deportment, and of intelligence, should have its effect downward, through all the gradations of the social condition, even to the lowest. It is easy to conceive such an effect, so pervading them all, that there should be perceptible, in every class, a modification betraying a beneficent influence of those the most eminent and enlightened. But in order to this, the subordinate ranks must be in a certain degree in communication, on favorable and amicable terms, with the higher. We have known individual instances of such a friendly approximation, and of the benefit of it. Each reader may probably recollect an example, in the case of some man in humble station, but who has had, (for his condition,) an excellent education; having been well instructed and exercised in his youth in the elements of useful knowledge; having had good principles diligently inculcated upon him; having subsequently instructed himself, to the best of his very confined means and opportunity, through a habit of reading; and exhibiting in his manners all the decorums of a respectable human being. It has been seen, that such a man, has not found, in his superiors in station and attainment, any disposition to shun him; and has not felt in himself or his situation any reason why he should seek to shun them. He

would occasionally fall into conversation with the wealthy and accomplished proprietor, or the professional man of learning, in the neighborhood. He maintained toward them a modest deference, but yet with an honest freedom of avowing his opinion, and making his observations on the matters brought in question. His intelligent manner of attending to what they said, his perfect understanding of the language naturally employed by cultivated sense, the considerateness and pertinence of his replies, and the chastened independence, just amounting to the absence of servility and awkward timidity, greatly pleased those persons of superior rank, and induced various friendly and useful attentions, on their part, to him and his family. He and his family thus experienced a direct benefit of superior sense, civility, and good principle, in a humble condition; and were put under a new responsibility to preserve a character for those distinctions.—Now think of the incalculable advantage to society, if any thing approaching to this were the general state of social relation, between the lower and the higher orders.

On the contrary, there is no medium of complacent communication between the classes of higher condition and endowment, and an ignorant coarse populace. Except on occasion of giving orders or magisterial rebukes, the gentleman will never think of accosting the clowns in his vicinity. They, on their part, are desirous to avoid him; excepting when any of



them may have a purpose to gain, by arresting his attention, with an ungainly cringe; or when some of those, that have no kind of dependence on him, are disposed to cross his way with a look and strut of rudeness, to show how little they care for him. The servility, and the impudence, almost equally repress, in him, all friendly disposition toward a voluntary intercourse with the class. There is thus as complete a dissociation between the two orders, as mutual dislike, added to every imaginable dissimilarity, can create. And this broad, ungracious separation, intercepts all modifying influence, that might otherwise have passed, from the intelligence and refinement of the one, upon the barbarism of the other.

But there is, in human nature, a pertinacious disposition to work disadvantages, in one way or other, into privileges. The people, in being thus consigned to a low and alien ground, in relation to the cultivated part of society, are put in possession, as it were, of a territory of their own; where they can give their disposition freer play, and act out their characters in their own manner; under none of the necessity or policy which, had they occupied a ground where they must have been in communication with persons of superior order, they would have felt of partially conforming to the tastes and manners of those superiors. They thus enjoy a great emancipation; a degrading and pernicious one indeed, but one of which they are certain to take the full license. In all things

and situations, it is one of the first objects with human beings, to verify experimentally the presumed extent of their liberty and privilege. In this dissociation, the people are rid of the many salutary restraints and incitements, which they would have been made to feel, if on terms of friendly recognition with the respectable part of the community; they have neither honor nor disgrace, from that quarter, to take into their account; and this contributes to extinguish all sense and care of respectability of character,—a sense and care which will never be maintained by any regard to one another's estimates, which they are far enough from holding in reverence: in truth there is a kind of tacit mutual understanding among them, that, for the benefit of them all, they are systematically to set aside all high notions and nice responsibilities of character and conduct.

And what is the natural consequence of their being thus abandoned to themselves, free from all the influence they would have been under in a state of friendly contiguity, if we may so express it, to the cultivated orders? Times may have been, when the great mass, thus detached, combined such a quietude with their ignorance, that they had none but submissive feelings in relation to their superiors, whose property, almost, they were inured to consider themselves; when it never occurred to them to make a question, why there should be so vast a difference of condition between beings of the same race, when there were never unfolded to their view,

the portentous possibilities included in the fact of the immense superiority of numbers, and therefore of the physical force, of the lower order as put in comparison with the higher. But the times of this perfect, unquestioning, un-murmuring, succumbency under the actual allotment, have passed away; except in such regions as the Russian empire, where they have yet long to continue. In the other principal states of Europe, and especially in our own, the grossest ignorance of the people has nowhere prevented them from acquiring a sense of their strength and importance; with a certain ill conceived, but stimulant notion, of some change which they think ought to take place in their condition. How, indeed, should it have been possible, for any considerable proportion of them to remain unaware of this strength and importance, while the whole civilized world was shaken with a practical and tremendous controversy, between the two grand opposed orders of society, concerning their respective rights; or that they should not have taken a strong, and, from the rudeness of their mental condition, a fierce interest, in the principle and progress of the strife? And how should they have failed to hear, that during this commotion, innumerable persons from the lowest class, signaling themselves by talent and daring, had taken, by main strength, the advantageous ground formerly deemed in a great measure the peculiar right, as if by a law of nature of those who held their claim in virtue of their nativity?

The effect of all this is gone deep into the minds, of great numbers who are not excited, in consequence, to any worthy exertion for raising themselves, individually, from their degraded condition, by the earnest improvement and application of their faculties and means. The feeling of many of them seems to be, that they must and will sullenly abide by the ill-starred fate of their class, till some great comprehensive alteration, in their favor, shall absolve them from that bond of hostile sentiment, in which they make common cause against the superior orders; and shall create a state of things in which it shall be worth while for the individual to make an effort to raise himself. We can at best, (they seem to say,) but barely maintain, with the utmost difficulty, a miserable life; and you talk to us of cultivation, of discipline, of moral respectability, of efforts to come out from our degraded rank! No, we shall even stay where we are, till it is seen how the question is settled between the people of our sort, and those who will have it that they are of a far worthier kind. There may then, perhaps, be some chance for such as we; and if not, the less we are disturbed about improvement, knowledge, and all those things, the better, while we are bearing the heavy load a few years, to die like those before us.

We said they are banded in a hostile sentiment. It is true, that among such a degraded populace there is very little kindness, or care for one another's interests. They all know too

well what they all are not, to be much attached to one another. But it is infinitely easier, for any set of human beings, to maintain a community of feeling in hostility to something else, than in benevolence toward one another; for here no sacrifice is required of any one's self-interest. And it is certain, that the subordinate portions of society, in this and several other nations, have come to regard the occupants of the tracts of fertility and sunshine, the possessors of opulence, splendor, and luxury, with a deep settled systematic aversion,—to use the most moderate term; with a disposition to contemplate in any other light than that of a calamity, an extensive downfall of the favorites of fortune, when a brooding imagination figures such a thing as possible; and with but very slight hints, from conscience, of the iniquity of the most tumultuary accomplishment of such a catastrophe. In a word, so far from considering their own welfare as identified with the stability of the existing social order, they consider it as something that would spring from the ruin of that order. They have lost all that veneration by habit, partaking somewhat perhaps of the nature of a superstition, which had been protracted downward, though progressively attenuated with the lapse of time, from the feudal ages into the last century. They have quite lost, too, in this disastrous age, that sense of competence, and possible well-being, which might have harmonized their feelings with a social economy under which they have enjoyed

such a state. Whatever the actual economy may have of wisdom in its institutions, and of splendor, and fulness of all good things, in some parts of its apportionment, they feel that what is allotted to most of *them*, in its arrangements, is pressing hardship, galling unremitting poverty. And while thus thrown loose from the former ties to the social order, their minds have not been seized upon to be put under the substitutional ones which sound instruction alone could impose. Wise instruction might have made them capable of understanding, how a considerable proportion of the evil may have been inevitable from uncontrollable causes; of admitting in their consciences that national calamities are visitations of divine judgment, of which they were to reflect whether they had not deserved a heavy share; and of comprehending that, at all events, rancor, violence, and disorder, cannot be the way to alleviate any of the evils, but to aggravate them all. But, we repeat it, there are millions in this land, and if we include the neighboring island politically united to it, many millions, who have received no instruction adequate, in the smallest degree; to counteract the natural effect of the distresses of their condition, or to create a new principle of adherence to the established order, in place of those which time and the innovation of opinions have worn out.

Thus alienated, and thus not reclaimed, there is a large proportion of human strength and feeling not in vital combination with the social

system, but aloof from it, looking at it with "gloomy and malign regard," in a state progressive toward a fitness to be impelled against it with a dreadful shock, under the actuating energy of whatever daring powerful spirits might arise, intent on its demolition, and favored by opportune conjunctures of circumstances. There have not been wanting examples to shew, with what fearful effect this hostility may come into action, in the crisis of the fate of a nation's ancient system; where this alienated portion of its own people, rushing in, have revenged upon it the neglect of their tuition; that neglect, which had abandoned them to so utter a "lack of knowledge," that they really understood no better than to expect their own solid advantage in general havoc and disorder. But how bereft of sense the *state* too must be, that would thus *let* a multitude of its people grow up in a condition of mind to believe, that the sovereign expedient for their welfare is to be found in spoliation and destruction! It might easily have comprehended, what it was reasonable to expect from the matured dispositions and strength, of such of its children as it abandoned to be nursed by the wolf.

While this principle of ruin was working on, by a steady and natural process, this supposed infatuated State was, it is extremely possible, directing its chief care to maintain the splendor of a court, or to extort the means for prosecuting some object of vain and wicked ambition, some project of conquest and military glory.

## SECTION VII.

*Answer to a very common, but futile objection. Advantages of a general diffusion of knowledge, in connexion with religion, illustrated.*

BUT there may be persons ready to ask here, whether it be so certain that giving the people of the lower order more knowledge, and sharpening their faculties, will really tend to the preservation of good order. Would not such improvement elate them, to a most extravagant estimate of their own worth and importance; and therefore result in insufferable arrogance, both in the individuals and the class? Would they not, on the strength of it, be continually assuming to sit in judgment on the proceedings and claims of their betters, even in the most lofty stations; and demanding their own pretended rights, with a troublesome and probably turbulent pertinacity? Would they not, since their improvement cannot from their condition in life, be large and deep, be in just such a half taught state, as would make them exactly fit to be wrought upon by all sorts of crafty schemers, fierce declaimers, empirics, and innovators? Is it not, in short; too probable that, since an increase of mental power is available to bad uses as well as good, the results would greatly preponderate on the side of evil?



They would do well to put the objection in direct terms, and say, Understanding is to be men's guide to right conduct, and therefore the less understanding they have, the more safe are we against their going wrong. But not to dwell on the absurdity of denying, that the more mental light people have, the better qualified, in that proportion, must they be to discern their duty,—nor on the tendency of an argument, (if such questions contain one, which goes to depreciate the desire of truth, and all that has been venerated as wisdom, and all literature, and divine revelation, and our rational nature itself,—not to insist on this absurdity, we can most confidently answer from matter of fact. It is proved by fact, that giving the people more knowledge and more sense, does not tend to disorder and insubordination; does not excite them to impatience and extravagant claims; does not spoil them for the ordinary business of life, imposed by duty and necessity; does not make them the dupes of knaves; nor prompt them, to seek the benefit of the improvement of their faculties in turning knaves themselves. Employers can testify, from all sides, that there is a striking general difference between those bred up in ignorance and rude vulgarity, and those who have been trained through the well ordered schools for the humble classes; a difference exceedingly in favor of the latter, who are found not only more apt at understanding and executing, but more decorous, more respectful, more attentive to orders,

more ready to see and acknowledge the propriety of good regulations, and more disposed to a practical acquiescence in them; far less inclined to ebriety and low company; and more to be depended on in point of honesty. In almost any part of the country, where the experiment has been zealously prosecuted for a moderate number of years, a long resident observer can discern a modification in the character of the neighborhood; a mitigation of the former brutality of manners; a less frequency of brawls and quarrels, and less tendency to draw together into rude riotous assemblages. There is especially a marked difference on the Sabbath, on which multitudes attend public worship, whose forefathers used to be found in those very assemblages on that day; and who would themselves, in all probability, have followed the same course, but for the tuition which has led them into a better. In many instances, the children have carried from the schools inestimable benefits home to their unhappy families; winning even their depraved thoughtless parents into consideration and concern about their most important interests,—a precious repayment of all the long toils and cares, endured to support them through the period of childhood, and an example of that rare class of phenomena, in which a superlative beauty arises from the inversion of the general order of nature.

Even the frightful statements of the increase, in recent years, of active juvenile de-

pravity, especially in the metropolis, include a gratifying testimony in favor of education. The advocates of schools have had the triumph of its being shewn, that it was not from *these* seminaries that such delinquents were to go out, to evince that the improvement of intelligence may be but the greater ability for fraud and mischief. No, it was uniformly found to have been in very different places of resort, that these wretches had been almost from their infancy, accomplished for crime; and that their training had not taken or needed any assistance from an exercise on literary rudiments, from bibles, catechisms, or religious and moral poetry, or from an attendance on public worship. Indeed, as if it were through an intervention of Providence to confound the cavillers, the children and youth of the schools were found to have been more generally preserved from defection to the league of premature reprobates, than a moral calculator, with the quality of human nature kept in his sight, would have ventured to anticipate, upon a moderate estimate of the influence of instruction.

Experience equally falsifies the notion that knowledge, imparted to the lower orders, beyond what is necessary to the handling of their tools, tends to factious turbulence; to a reaction, (in pursuance of certain wild principles and theories,) against law and regular government in society. The maintainers of which notion should also affirm, that the people of Scotland have long been about the most disaf-

fect, tumultuary, revolutionary rabble in Europe; and that the Cornish miners, at this day so worthily distinguished at once by exercised intellect and religion, are incessantly on the point of insurrection, against their employers or the state. And we shall be just as ready to believe them if they also assert, that, in those popular irregularities which have too often disturbed, in particular places, the peace of our country, the clamorous bands or crowds, collected for purposes of intimidation or demolition, have consisted chiefly of the more cultivated part of the poorer inhabitants;—yes, or that this class furnished one in a hundred of the numbers forming such lawless bands; even though many of these more instructed of the people might be suffering, with their families, the utmost extremity of want, the direct pressure of that hunger which, as well as oppression, may “make a wise man mad.” Many of these, in their desolate abodes, with tears of parents and children mingled together, have been committing themselves to their Father in heaven, at the time that the ruder part of the population have been carrying alarm, and sometimes mischief, through the district, and so confirming the faith, we may suppose, of sundry magnates of the neighborhood, who had vehemently asserted, a few years before, the pernicious tendency of educating the people.

It would be less than what is due to suffering humanity, to leave this topic without observing, that if a numerous portion of the community

should be sinking under severe, protracted, unmitigated distress, distress on which there appears to them no dawn of hope from ordinary causes, it is not to be held a disparagement to the value of education, if some of those who have enjoyed a measure of that advantage, in common with a greater number who have not, should become feverishly agitated with imaginations of great sudden changes in the social system; and be led to entertain suggestions of irregular violent expedients for the removal of insupportable evils. It must, in all reason, be acknowledged the last lesson, which education could be expected to teach with practical effect, that one part of the community should be willing to resign themselves, as far as they can see, to destruction, that the others may live in sufficiency and tranquillity. Such heroic devotement might not be difficult in the sublime elation of Thermopylæ; but it is a very different matter in a melancholy cottage, and in the midst of famishing children.

After thus referring to matter of fact, for contradiction of the notion, that the mental cultivation of the lower classes might render them less subject to the rules of good order, we have to observe, in further reply, that we are not heard insisting on the advantages of increased knowledge, and mental invigoration, among the people, *unconnected with the inculcation of religion*. Nor is this essential point forgotten or neglected in the actual system of procedure, in the institutions of which we are the advocates.

Undoubtedly, their conductors and zealous friends account knowledge valuable absolutely, as being the apprehension of things as they are; a prevention of delusion; and so far a fitness for right volitions. But they consider religion, (besides being itself the primary and infinitely the most important part of knowledge,) as a principle indispensable for securing the full benefit of all the rest. It is desired and endeavored, that the understandings of these opening minds may be taken possession of, by just and solemn ideas of their relation to the Eternal Almighty Being; that they may be taught to apprehend it as an awful reality, that they are perpetually under his inspection; and as a certainty, that they must at length appear before him in judgment, and find, in another life, the consequences of what they are in spirit and conduct here. It is impressed upon them, that his will is the supreme law; that his declarations are the most momentous truth known on earth; and his favor and condemnation the greatest good and evil. And it is wished, and endeavored, to be by the light of this divine wisdom that they are disciplined in other parts of knowledge; so that nothing they learn may be detached from all sensible relation to it, or have a tendency contrary to it. Thus it is sought to be secured, that, as the pupil's mind grows stronger, and multiplies its resources, and he therefore has necessarily more power and means for what is wrong, there may be luminously presented to him, as if celestial eyes

visibly beamed upon him, the most solemn ideas that can enforce what is right.

Such is the discipline meditated for preparing the subordinate classes to pursue their individual welfare, and act their part as members of the community.—They are to be trained in early life to diligent employment of their faculties, tending to strengthen them, regulate them, and give their possessors the power of effectually using them. They are to be exercised to form clear correct notions, instead of crude vague delusive ones. The subjects of these ideas will be, a very considerable number of the most important facts and principles; which are to be presented to their understandings with a patient repetition of efforts to fix them there as knowledge that cannot be forgotten. By this measure of substantial acquirement and by the habit formed in so acquiring, they will be qualified for making further attainment in future time, if they are disposed to improve their opportunities. During this progress, and in connexion with many of its exercises, their duty is to be enforced on them, in the various forms in which they will have to make a choice, between right and wrong in their conduct toward society. There will be inculcated justice, prudence, inoffensiveness, estrangement from the counsels and leagues of vain and bad men; love of peace, hatred of all disorder and violence, and a respect for institutions designed and necessary to prevent these evils. All this will be taught directly from the Holy Scrip-

tures, from which authority will also be inculcated, all the while, the principles of religion. And religion, while its grand reference is to the state of the soul towards God, and to eternal interests, yet takes every principle and rule of morals under the full sanction of its authority; making the primary obligation and responsibility be towards God, of every thing that is a duty with respect to men. So that, with the subjects of this education, the sense of *propriety* shall be *conscience*, the consideration of how they ought to be regulated, in their conduct as a part of the community, shall be the recollection that their Master in heaven dictates the laws of that conduct, and will judicially hold them amenable for every part of it.

And, as far as any judgment can be formed of means as adapted to ends, is not this endeavor to fix religious principles in ascendancy, the way to bring up citizens fit to preserve the great social compact? Or perhaps far less interference of the divine sanctions, would do quite as well, for securing peace and good order among the multitude, provided they be but kept in profound ignorance,—the religious principles being rendered unnecessary to them, just in the proportion of their want of other knowledge. This is, at least virtually, said by the disapprovers of the designs for educating the people. For, it were most idle for these persons to pretend, that they would have the people, in some way or other, put in the state of understanding the principal truths, and acknowl-



edging the sanctions, of religion, as a *special and separate attainment*, while remaining destitute of mental cultivation in the general sense. If those who would so pretend, were to see the actual phenomenon; if it were to come before them as a real fact,—(an extremely ignorant man entertaining a lively and influential sense of religion,)—would they not greatly marvel? Would they not be nonplussed in trying to understand such a thing? What if there were whispered to them, just then, some of the phrases at which they had often sneered; for example, *divine grace*; which the man himself might very possibly be guilty of naming? *We* shall not deny the possibility of such a phenomenon *from such a cause*. But here we are speaking of the course required in human proceeding, by practical rational methods, toward the attainment of an object attainable through discipline. And how, it may well be demanded, is this supposed education to be conducted, which shall preserve the people's general ignorance inviolate, and yet inculcate religion with the due efficacy for making them virtuous citizens? How introduce the subject into minds unformed to admit any thing but the impressions of sense; never made to affix a meaning to the very terms to be employed; never opened to a capacity of comprehending any one idea approaching to greatness or remoteness; and infinitely repugnant to *begin* so unwonted and uncouth an exercise with the topic of religion, of all subjects in the world? No, assuredly,

the good order of a populace, left in stupid ignorance, cannot be preserved by the effect of so slight an infusion of religion, as these pretended good friends of theirs would instil into their mental grossness. It must be done by something far stronger; and if it actually is done already, in nearly the required degree, with no more of religion than this, it is done by other means; and therefore much hypocritical canting about the necessity of religion in the lower orders, to the safety of the state, might be spared to such persons as we have heard uttering it together with more than a doubt of the prudence of qualifying these same lower orders even to read the Bible.

But all this while, we are forgetting to inquire how much is to be understood as included in that good order, that deference and subordination, which it has been apprehended that the possession of more mind and knowledge, by the people, might disturb or destroy. May not the notion of it, as entertained by some persons, be conceived somewhat according to the model of an earlier age, or of some eastern dominion? Is it required, that the sentiment of obsequiousness should be, in the people, like the instinct by which a lower order of animals is in awe of a higher, by which the common tribe of beasts would shrink at the sight of lions? Or is the deference expected to be of an absolute, unconditional kind, as to something claiming it by simple divine right, as the prophets or judges of Israel did? Are the people to

be prevented from considering their relation to the community, any further than the labors it is their assigned part to perform in it, and the respect they are to pay to the higher orders of it? Are they to entertain no questions, respecting the right adjustment of their condition, in the arrangements of the great social body? Are they forbidden ever to admit a single doubt, of its being quite a matter of course, that every thing that ought to be is done, and in such manner as it ought to be, for the interests of their class; or, therefore, to pretend to any such right as that of representing, complaining, and remonstrating?

A subordination founded in such principles, and required to such a degree, it is true enough that the communication of knowledge is not the way to perpetuate. For the first use, which men will infallibly make, of an enlargement of their faculties and ideas, will be to take a larger view of their interests; and they may happen, as soon as they do so, to think they discover that it was quite time; and the longer they do so, to retain still less and less of implicit faith, that those interests will be done justice to without their own vigilance and intervention. An educated people must be very slow indeed in their learning, if they do not soon grow out of all belief in the *necessary* wisdom, and rectitude, of any class of human creatures whatever. They will see how unreasonable it were to expect, that any class will fail in fidelity to the great natural principle, of

making its own advantage the first object; and therefore they will not be apt to listen, with the gravity which in other times and regions may have been shewn in listening, to injunctions of gratitude for the willingness, evinced by the higher orders, to take on them the trouble of watching and guarding the people's welfare, by keeping them and all their interests in a proper course.

But neither will it *necessarily* be in the spirit of hostility, in the worst sense of the word, that a more instructed people will thus shew a diminished credulity of reverence, toward the predominant ranks in the social economy; and will keep in habitual exercise upon them a somewhat suspicious observation, and a judicial estimate; with an honest freedom in sometimes avowing disapprobation, and strongly asserting any right which is believed to be endangered. This will only be expressing that, since all classes naturally consult, by preference, their own interests, it is plainly unfit, that one portion of the community should be trusted with an unlimited discretion, in ordering what affects the welfare of the others; and that, in all prudence, the people must withhold an entire assent, and unconditional unexamining acquiescence; till some such thing as a commission of angels shall come to harmonise, and then administer, interests which are placed so unappeasably at strife:—for as to what is so often asserted of those interests being in reality the same, it is evidently impossible for either party, even

while believing so, to concede to the other the exclusive adjustment of the practical mode of identification.

But only let the utmost that is possible be done, to train the people, from their early years, to a sound use of their reason, under a discipline for imparting a valuable portion of knowledge, and assiduously inculcating the principles of social duty and of religion; and then something may be said, to good purpose, to their understanding and conscience, while they are maintaining the inevitable competition of claims with their superiors. They will then be capable of seeing put in a fair balance, many things which headlong ignorance would have taken all one way. They will be able to appreciate many explanations, alleged causes of delay, statements of difficulty between opposing reasons; which would be thrown away on an ignorant populace. And it would be an inducement to their making a real exertion of the understanding, that they thus found themselves so formally put upon their responsibility for its exercise,—that they were summoned to a rational discussion, instead of being addressed in the style of Pharaoh to the Israelites. The strife of interests would thus come to be carried on with less fierceness and malice, in the spirit and manner, on the part of the people. And the ground itself of the contention, the substance of the matters in contest, would be gradually diminished—by the concessions of the higher classes to the claims of the lower: for

there is no affecting to dissemble, that a great mental and moral improvement of the people would necessitate, though there were not a single movement of rude force in the case, important concessions to them, on the part of the superior orders. A people advanced to such a state, would make its moral power felt in a thousand ways and every moment. This general augmentation of mind and virtue would send forth, against all arrangements, and inveterate usages, of the nature of invidious repression and exclusion, an energy, which could no more be resisted than the power of the sun, when he advances in the spring to annihilate the relics and vestiges of the winter. This plastic influence would modify the institutions of the national community, to a state adapted to secure all the popular interests; and to convey the genuine, collective opinion, to bear directly on the counsel and transaction of national concerns. That opinion would have a weight which could not be set at defiance, and an unpervverted fidelity of manifestation, which would leave no possibility of affecting to take an opposite one as the genuine.

That such consequences would inevitably follow a highly improved general state of the people, must be freely acknowledged to those, who cannot consent to their receiving the utmost practicable cultivation. And is it *because* this would follow, that these disapprovers would deprecate such a cultivation? Then let them say, what it is that *they* are hoping for

from an opposite system. *What* is it, that they are seriously promising themselves, from the auspicious influence of all the ignorance, that can henceforward be retained among the population of this part of the world? They see, that in this country; and other of the great states of Europe, there is gone forth, among the great mass of the people, a spirit of revolt from the sense of obligation toward institutions simply as existing or as ancient; a spirit that re-acts, with deep and settled antipathy, against some of the arrangements and claims, of the order into which the national community has been disposed by institutions and the course of events; a spirit which regards some of the appointments, and requirements, of that order, as little better than adaptations of the system to the will, and gratification, of the more fortunate portion of the species. We need not repeat, with what dreadful commotion the pervasion of this spirit has wrought, both in its own proper action and explosive force, and as excited to preternatural energy in the conflict with the arrayed power of the old order of things. And is it extinguished? Is it subdued? Is it in the slightest degree reduced?—reduced, we mean, as a principle fixed in the decided form of an opinion, and actuating, with the strength and sanction of this its possession of the judgment, the wishes and strongest passions; and often kindling, in the more restless and sanguine spirits, imaginations of supposea-

ble changes, and of the expedients for accomplishing them.

Is it, we repeat, repressed? There may be persons who cannot believe it possible, "good easy men," that it can have lived in spite of a world of war and legislation aimed at its destruction, to come forth, with unabated vigor, at the opportune junctures in the future progress of events; like some great serpent, meeting and glaring upon the sight again, with his appalling glance and uninjured length of volume, after a storm of missiles had sent him to his retreat, and been poured in there with destructive intention after him. But these must be the dullest, or most spell-bound in their faculties, of all prognosticators. Repressed!—what is it that is manifesting itself in the most remarkable events in the old, and what has been named the new world, at this very hour? And what are the measures of several of the great state authorities of Europe, and the apparent agitation, and as it were fitful changes of feeling, between rashness and dismay, in the adoption of those measures in some of the states, but a confession, that after all, this spirit is growing stronger? Every year renders it but more evident, that the principle in action is something far different from a superficial transient irritation; that it has gone the whole depth of the mind; has possessed itself of the very judgment and conscience, of an innumerable legion, extending, continually, to a still greater number. No doubt is permitted to remain, whether the real cur-



rent of the popular feeling has made a portentous change in its direction, to return to its ancient course, when the stream of some great branch of the Mississippi shall resume the channel, which it has abandoned by making for itself a new one into the Mexican Gulf. For when once the great mass of the lower and larger division of the community, shall have become filled with an absolute, and almost unanimous conviction, that they, the grand physical agency of that community; that they, the operators, the producers, the preparers, of almost all it most essentially wants; that they, the part, therefore, of the social assemblage so obviously the most essential to its existence, and on which all the rest must depend;—that they are placed in a condition, in the great social arrangement, which does not do justice to this their importance, which does not adequately reward these their services;—we say, when this shall have become the feeling and the conviction, to the very centre of the mind, in the millions of Europe, we would put it as a question to the judgment of a sober man, how this state of feeling is to be reversed or neutralized, while those circumstances of the economy which have caused it are remaining. But then we put it to his judgment at the next step, what the consequence must ultimately be. Will he pretend not to foresee, that the power of so vast a combination of wills and agents, must sooner or later, in one manner or another, affect a great modification in the arrangements of the

social system? What plan, then, is he supposing adopted to prevent it? Are the higher and more privileged portions of the national communities to have, henceforward, just this one grand object of their existence, this chief employment for all their knowledge, means, and power, namely to keep down the lower orders of their fellow-citizens, by mere stress of coercion and punishment? Are they resolved, and prepared, for a rancorous interminable hostility in prosecution of such a benign purpose; with, of course, a continual exhaustion upon it of the means, which might be applied to diminish that wretchedness of the people, which has been, and must continue to be, the grand corroborator of the principles that have passed like an earthquake under the foundations of the old social systems? But supposing this *should* be the course pursued, how long can it be effectual? That must be a very firm structure, must be of gigantic mass or most excellent basis and conformation, against which the ocean shall unremittingly wear and foam in vain. And it does not appear what there can be of such impregnable consistence in any particular construction of the social order which is, by the supposition, to be resolved to be maintained in sovereign immutability, in permanent frustration of the persevering, ever-growing, aim and impulse of the great majority, pressing on to achieve important innovations in their favor; innovations in those systems of institution and usage, under which they will never cease to

think they have had far less happiness heretofore than they ought to have had. We cannot see how this impulse can be so repelled or diverted that it shall not prevail at length, to the effect of either bearing down, or wearing away, a portion of the order of things which the ascendent classes in every part of Europe would have fondly wished to maintain in perpetuity, without one particle of surrender.

But though they cannot preserve its entireness, the manner in which it shall yield to alteration is in a great measure at their command. And here is the important consideration. If a movement has really begun in the general popular mind of the nations, and if the principle of it is growing and insuppressible, so that it must in one manner or another ultimately prevail, what will the state be of any national community where it shall be an unenlightened, half barbarous, people that so prevails?—a people no better informed, perhaps, than to believe that all the hardship and distress endured by themselves and their forefathers were wrongs, which they suffered from the higher orders; than to ascribe to bad government, and the rapacity and selfishness of the rich, the very evils caused by inclement seasons; and than to assume it as beyond question, that the whole accumulation of their resentments, brought out into action at last, is but justice demanding and effecting a retribution.

In such an event, what would not the superior orders be glad to give and forego, in com-

promise with principles, tempers, and demands, which they will know they should never have had to encounter, to the end of time, if, instead of spending their vast advantages on merely their own state and indulgence, they had applied them in a mode of operation and influence tending to improve, in every way, the situation and character of the people? It is true, that such a wild triumph of overpowering violence would necessarily be short. A blind turbulent monster of popular power never can for a long time maintain the domination of a political community. It would rage and riot itself out of breath and strength, succumb under some strong coercion of its own creating, and lie subject and stupified, till its spirit should be recovered and incensed for new commotion. But this impossibility of a very prolonged reign of confusion, would be little consolation for the classes, against whose privileged condition the first tremendous eruption should have driven. It would not much cheer a man who should see his abode carried away, and his fields and plantations devastated, to tell him that what had inflicted this ruin was but a transient mountain torrent. A short prevalence of the overturning force would have sufficed, for the subversion of the proudest longest established state of privilege; and most improbable would it be, that those who lost it in the tumult, would find the new authority, which would arise as that tumult subsided, either able or disposed to restore it. They might perhaps,

(on a favorable supposition,) survive in personal safety, but in humiliated fortunes, to ruminate on their manner of occupying their former elevated situation, and of employing its ample means of power, a due portion of which applied to promote the universal education of the community, with an accompanying liberal yet very gradual concession of privileges to the people, would have prevented the catastrophe.

Let us urge then, that a zealous endeavor to render it absolutely impossible that, in any change whatever, the destinies of a nation should fall under the power of an ignorant infuriated multitude, may take place of the presumption that there *is* no great change to be ever effected by the progressive and conscious importance of the people; a presumption than which nothing can appear more like insatiation; when we look at the recent scenes and present temperament of the moral world. Educate the people; train them to sound sense; civilize them; promote the reformation of their morals; inculcate the principles of religion, simply and solemnly *as* religion, as a thing directly of divine dictation, and not as if half of its authority were in virtue of human institutions; let the higher orders generally make it perfectly evident to the multitude that they are desirous to improve them, raise them, and promote their happiness; and then *whatever* the demands of the people as a body, thus improving in understanding and the sense of justice, shall come to be, and *whatever* modification their preponder-

ance may ultimately enforce on the great social arrangements, it will be infallibly certain that there *never can* be a love of disorder, an insolent anarchy, a prevailing spirit of revenge and devastation. Such a conduct of the ascendent classes would, in this nation at least, *secure that* as long as the world lasts, there *never would* be any formidable commotion, or violent sudden changes. All those modifications of the national economy which an improving people would aspire and would deserve to obtain, would be gradually accomplished, in a manner by which no party would be injured, and all would be the happier.

## CHAPTER III.

THE FATAL INAPTITUDE WHICH IGNORANCE CREATES, OR CONSTITUTES, FOR RECEIVING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

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## SECTION I.

*Uneducated minds destitute of any religious notions, and fortified against all approach of truth.*

WE do not know whether any of these observations will be accounted foreign to the purpose, of illustrating the effects of popular ignorance. However that may be, we shall pursue the course of illustration toward its conclusion, by describing somewhat more fully here, than in the former stages, the manner in which the want of mental improvement affects the people in regard to the most important concern of all, Religion. It is true, that this has been already very expressly adverted to, and perhaps more than once; but the topic seems to merit a considerable amplification; and will better excuse, than any other, the fault of a too evident repetition. What we would especially remark upon is, the wretched inaptitude which ignorance creates or constitutes for re-

ceiving religious instruction.—But first a few sentences relative to what there actually is of religious notion in the minds of the uneducated, —to shew whether, as far as that great subject is concerned, education may be spared.

*Some* notion of such a thing, something different in their consciousness from the absolute negation of the idea, something that faintly responds to the terms in which a person conversing with them would express the idea, in the way of questioning them on the subject, may be presumed to exist in the minds of all who are advanced a considerable way into youth, or come to mature age, in a country where all have the monitory spectacle of edifices for religious use, on spots appointed also for the interment of the dead. If this sort of measured caution in the assumption should seem bordering on the ridiculous, we would recommend those who would smile at it to make some little experiments. It would not be difficult to insinuate themselves, on road or field, into the company of some of the innumerable rustics who have grown up destitute of every thing worth calling education; or of the equally ill-fated beings in the alleys, precincts, and lower employments, of towns. They might manage to avoid an abruptness and judicial formality, which would prevent the readiness to be communicative, while they contrived to question, in effect rather than express form, some of these persons respecting God, Jesus Christ, the human soul, the invisible world. And we can



assure them they would in many instances receive such answers as would amaze them. The exposure made to them in these answers would break up, as by a sudden shock, their easy complacent assurance, (were it possible they had been so unknowing as to cherish such a feeling,) that almost all the people must, by some means or other, have been brought to be tolerably apprised of a few first principles of religion; that this *could* not have failed to be the case in a community acknowledging, in its collective capacity, a considerable responsibility that its members should not be left totally destitute of the most essential of all things to their well-being. This agreeable assurance would vanish, like a dream interrupted, at the spectacle thus presented, of persons nearly, very nearly, as devoid of those first principles, after living eighteen, thirty, forty, or twice forty years, under the superintendence of that community, as if they had been the aboriginal rovers of the American forests, or natives of unvisited coral-built spots in the ocean.

If these examiners were to prosecute the investigation widely, and their reflections grew more pensive with their discoveries, they might become sensible of a very altered estimate of this our christian tract of the earth. From appearing to them so peculiarly auspicious, as if almost by some virtue of its climate, to the cultivation and enlargement of religious understanding in the people, it might come to appear to them as favorable to the developement of

*all things rather than that.* Plants and trees, the diversity of animal forms and powers, the human frame, the features enlarging or enlarged to manhood in the persons looked upon while making the answers to the supposed examiner, with their passions also, and prevailing dispositions—see how all things can unfold themselves in our territory, and grow and enlarge to their completeness,—excepting the ideas of the human soul relating to the Almighty, and to the grand purpose of its existence!

The supposed answers would, in many instances, betray, that any thought of God at all was of very rare occurrence, as never having become strongly associated with any thing beheld in the whole creation. We should think it probable, as we have said before, that with many, while in health, weeks often pass away without the idea being once so presented as to hold the mind, so to speak, looking at it for one moment of time. If they could be set to any such task as that of retracing, at the end of the day or week, what has come into their minds, and what their thoughts have dwelt upon, it would no more be recalled that this idea had encountered them, than that a splendid meteor had passed through the air before them. Yet during such a space of time, their thoughts, such as they are, shall have run through incalculable thousands of changes; and even the divine name itself may have been pronounced by them a multitude of times, in joc-

ularity or imprecation. This is a state very near absolute atheism.

But that idea of God which has, by some means, found its way into their minds, to abide there so nearly in silence and oblivion,—what is it, when some direct call does really evoke it? It is generally a gross approximation of the conception of the Infinite Being to the likeness of man. If what they have heard of his being a Spirit, has indeed some little effect in prevention of the total debasement of the idea, it prevents it rather by confusion than by magnificence. It may somewhat restrain and baffle the tendency of the imagination to a direct degrading definition; but it does so by turning the idea as into a wide attenuated cloud. And ever and anon, this cloudy diffusion is again drawing in, and shaping, toward an image, enormous perhaps, and spectral, and portentous across the firmament, but in some strong analogy to the human mode of personality.

The divine attribute which is apprehended by them with most of an impression of reality, is a certain vastness of power. But, through the grossness of their intellectual atmosphere, this appears to them rather in the character of something prodigiously huge, than sublimely glorious.—As considered in his quality of moral judicial Governor, God is regarded by some of them as more disposed, than there is any reasonable cause, to be displeased with what is done in this world. But the far greater number have no prevailing sentiment that he takes

any very vigilant account or concern.\* And even those who entertain the more ungracious apprehension, have it not in sufficient force to make them, once in whole months, deliberately think it worth while to care what he may disapprove.

The notions that should answer to the doctrine of a Providence, are a confusion of some crude idea of a divine superintendence, with stronger fancies and impressions of luck and chance; and these still further, and most uncouthly, confounded by the admixture of the ancient heathen notion of fate, reduced from its philosophy to its dregs. In many instances, however, this obtains such a predominance, as to lessen the confusion, and withal, to preclude, in a great measure, the sense of accountability. In neither of these states of intellectual desolation is there any serious admission, at least during the enjoyment of health, of the duty or advantage of prayer.

The supposed examiner may endeavor to elicit the notions concerning the Redeemer of the world. They would be found, in numerous instances, amounting literally to no more than, that Jesus Christ was a worthy kind of man, (the word has actually been "gentleman," in

\* Some have no very distinct impression the one way or the other. Not very long since, a friend of the writer, in one of the midland counties, fell into talk, on a Sunday, with a man who had been in some very plain violation of the consecrated character of the day. He seriously inadvertent on this, adding, Don't you think God will be displeased at and punish such conduct? or words to that effect. The man, after a moment's consideration, answered, with unaffected cool simplicity, exactly thus: "That's according as how a takes it."

more than one instance that we have heard told from unquestionable authority,) who once, somewhere, (these national christians had never in their lives thought of inquiring when or where,) did a great deal of good, and was very ill used by bad people. The people now, they think, bad as they may be, would not do so in the like case. Some of these persons may have casually been at church; and are just aware that his name often recurs in its services; they never considered why; but they have a vague impression of its repetition having some kind of virtue, perhaps rather in the nature of a spell.—The names of the four evangelists are by some held literally and technically available for such an use.

A few steps withdrawn from this thickest of the mental fog, there are many, who are not entirely uninformed of something having been usually affirmed, by religious teachers, of Jesus Christ's being more than a man, and of his having done something of great importance toward preventing our being punished for our sins.. This combination of a majestic superiority to the human nature, with the fact of his being yet confessedly human, just passes their minds like a shape formed of a shadow, as one of the unaccountable things that may be as it is said, for what they know, but which they need not trouble themselves to think about. As to the great things said to be done by him, to save men from being punished, they see indeed no necessity for such an expedient, but if

it is so, very right, and so much the better; for between that circumstance in our favor, and God's being too good, after all that is said of his holiness and wrath, to be severe on such poor creatures as men, we must have a good chance of coming off safely at last. But multitudes of the miserably poor, however wicked, have a settled assurance of this coming off well at last, independently of any thing effected for men by the Mediator: they shall be exempted, they believe, from any future suffering in consideration of their having suffered so much here. There is nothing, in the scanty creed of great numbers, more firmly held than this.

It is true, they believe that the most atrociously wicked must go to a state of punishment after death. They consider murderers, especially, as under this doom. But the offences which they deem to deserve it, form but a short catalogue. It is indeed enlarged sometimes, in the case of the individual, by the addition of an offence which he would not have accounted so heinous, but that it has happened to be committed against *him*. We can recollect the exultation of sincere faith, seen mingling with the anger of an offended man, while *predicting*, as well as imprecating, this retribution of some injury he had suffered; a real injury, indeed, in some degree; yet of a kind which he would have held in small account, had he only seen it done to another person.—As to the nature of that future punishment, the ideas of these neglected minds, go scarcely at all beyond the im-

ages of corporeal anguish, conveyed by the well known metaphors.

It is most striking to observe how wholly negative are their conceptions of the future happiness, which it should seem they expect to obtain, as the necessary alternative of the evil they so easily assure themselves of escaping. The ordinary images employed in religious discourse to represent it, (if they should ever have heard enough of such discourse to be acquainted with those images,) are very little congenial to their notions of pleasure; and no more would the abstracted and elevated ideas be so, if they had intellect and thought enough to reach so far. Here the reflection again returns, what an inexpressible poverty of mind there is, when the people have no longer a mythology, and yet have not obtained in its place any knowledge of the true religion. The martial vagrants of Scandinavia glowed with the vivid anticipations of Valhalla; the savages of the western continent had their animating visions of the "land of souls;" the modern christian barbarians of England, who also expect to live after death, do not know what they mean by their phrase of "going to heaven."

Most of this class of persons think very little in any way whatever of the invisible spiritual economy. And many of them wish to think, if possible, still less. For they are liable to be occasionally affected with dark hints and hauntings of an unseen world. But it is very remarkable, how little these may contribute to

enforce the salutary impressions of religion. A man, who is, for instance, subject to the terror of apparitions, shall not therefore be in the smallest degree the less profane, except just at the time that this terror is upon him. A number of persons, of whom not one durst have walked, alone, at midnight, round a lonely church, encompassed with graves, and among them perhaps the recent one of a notoriously wicked man, will nevertheless, on a fine Sunday morning, form a row of rude idlers, standing in the road to this very church, to vent their jokes on the persons going thither to attend the offices of religion, and on those offices themselves.

Such, as regarding religion, is the state out of which it is desired to redeem a multitude of the people of this land. Or rather we should say, it is sought to save a multitude from being consigned to it. For consider, in the next place, (what we wished especially to point at, in this last and most important article in the enumeration of the evils of ignorance,) consider what a fatal inaptitude for receiving the truths of religion, is created by the neglect of training minds to the exercise of their faculties, and the acquirement of elementary information.

How inevitably it must be so, from the nature of the case!—There is a sublime economy of invisible realities. There is the Supreme Existence, an infinite and eternal Spirit. There are spiritual existences, that have kindled into brightness and power, from nothing, at his



creating will. There is an universal government, omnipotent, all-wise, and righteous, of that Supreme Being, over the creation. There is the immense tribe of human spirits, in a most peculiar and tremendous predicament, held under eternal obligation of conformity to a law which emanates from the holiness of its Sovereign Author, but perverted to a state of conformity to it, and opposition to him. Next, there is a marvellous anomaly of moral government, the constitution of a new state of relation between the Supreme Governor and this alienated race, through a Mediator, who makes an atonement for human iniquity, and stands representative before Almighty Justice, for those who gratefully accord to the mysterious appointment, and consign themselves to his charge. There are the several doctrines declaratory of this new constitution through all its parts. There is the view of religion in its operative character, the combination of its doctrines and precepts with a divine agency on the mind, transforming and disciplining it. And all this while, there is the invisible world, to which the spirits of men proceed at death, in possession of a conscious existence to be retained for ever; and there is the certain prospect of a final judgment and a retribution.

Look at this solemn ideal scene, so distinct, and stretching to such remoteness, from the field of ordinary things; consisting of elements of which it is for intellect alone to apprehend the reality; of objects with which intellect

alone can hold converse. Look at this scene; and then consider, what manner of beings you are calling upon to enter into it by contemplation. Beings who have never learned to think at all. Beings who have hardly ever once, in their whole lives, made a real effort, to direct and concentrate the action of their faculties on any thing abstracted from the objects palpable to the senses; whose entire attention has been engrossed, from their infancy, with the common business, the low amusements and gratifications, the idle talk, the local occurrences, which formed the whole compass of the occupation, and practically acknowledged interests, of their progenitors. Beings who have never been made, in the least, familiar with even the matters of fact, those especially of the scripture history, which stand in the most obvious relation to religion, and have given a substantial form, as it were, to some of its truths. Beings who will thus combine, as we have said before, the utmost aversion to any attempt at a purely intellectual exercise, with whatever dislike it is in our nature to feel toward this class of subjects. What kind of ideas should you imagine to be raised in their minds, by all the words you might employ, to place within their intellectual vision some portion of this spiritual order of things,—even should you be able, which you often would not, to engage any effort of attention to the subject?—And yet we have heard men, who had been disciplined in the most splendid institutions for mental cultivation

in the world, pertinaciously maintain, that the common people need not be taught so much as to be able to read the Bible, in order to their attaining a competent knowledge of religion; for that they may learn as much of it by an attendance at church, as it can be of any use for them to know.

Do such men ever make an immediate, personal experiment, on this happy facility with which mature ignorance learns religion? We may appeal to those pious and benevolent persons who have made the most numerous trials, for testimony to the inaptitude of uneducated people to receive that kind of instruction. You have visited, perhaps, some numerous family, or Sunday assemblage of several related families; to which you had access without awkward intrusion, in consequence of the acquaintance arising from near neighborhood, or of little services you had rendered, or of the circumstance of any of their younger children coming to your charity schools. You were soon made sensible what a desert you were in, as to all religious thought, by indications unequivocal to your perception, though, it may be, not reducible, in a few words, to exact description. And those indications were perhaps almost equally apparent in the young persons, those advanced to the middle of life, and those who were evidently destined not long to remain in it, the patriarch, perhaps, and the eldest matron, of the kindred company. You attempted by degrees, with all managements of art, as if you had

been seeking to gain a favor for yourselves, to train into the talk some topic bearing toward religion; and which could be followed up to a more explicit reference to that great subject, without the abruptness which causes instant silence and recoil. We will suppose, that the gloom of such a moral scene was not augmented to you, by the mortification of observing impatience of this suspension of their usual and favorite tenor of discourse, betrayed in marks of suppressed irritation, or rather by the withdrawing of one, and another, from the company. But it was quite enough to render the moments and feelings some of the most disconsolate you had ever experienced, to have thus immediately before you a number of rational beings as in a dark prison house, and to feel the impotence of your friendly efforts to bring them out. Their darkness of ignorance infused into your spirit the darkness of melancholy, when you perceived that the fittest words you could think of, in every change and combination in which you could dispose them, failed to impart, to their understanding, the most elementary and essential ideas of the most momentous subject.

You thought again, perhaps, and again, Surely *this* mode of expression, or *this*, as it is in words familiar to them, will define the meaning to their apprehension. But you were forced to perceive that the common words and phraseology of the language, those which make the substance of ordinary discourse on ordinary

subjects, had not, for the understandings of these persons, an indifferent and general applicableness. It seemed as if the perfectly neutral and general portion of the language had become in its meaning special and exclusive for their own sort of topics. Their narrow associations had rendered it incapable of conveying sense to them on matters foreign to their habits. When used on a subject to which they were quite unaccustomed, it became like a stream which, though one and the same current, flows clear on the one side, and muddy (as we sometimes see for a space) on the other,—and to them it was clear only at their own edge. And if even the plain popular language turned dark on their understandings when employed in explanation of religion, it is easy to imagine what had been the success of any thing approaching to a more technical expression of the subject, though it went no further than such terms as are used in the Bible.

You continued, however, the effort, for a while. As desirous to shew you due civility, some of the persons, perhaps the oldest, would give assent to what you said, with some sign of acknowledgment of the importance of the concern. In expressing this assent, they would say something which they took to be equivalent to what you had said. And when it was an intelligible idea that they uttered, it would probably shew the grossest possible misconception of the first principles of religion; something clumsily analogous to its worst perversions by

popery, or approaching to very paganism. You tried, perhaps, with repeated modifications of your expression, and attempts at illustration, to loosen the false notion, and to place the true one in such a near obviousness to the apprehension, that at least the difference should be seen, and (perhaps you hoped) a little movement excited to think further of the subject, and make a serious question of it. But all in vain. The hoary unhappy subject of your too late instruction, either would still take it that it came all to the same thing; or, if compelled to perceive that you were trying to make him *unthink* his poor old notions, and learn something new and contrary, would probably retreat, in a little while, into a half sullen half despondent silence, after observing, that he was too old, "the worse was the luck," to be able to learn about such things, which he never had, like you, the "scholarship" and the time for.

In several of the party you perceived the signs of almost a total blank. They seemed but to be waiting for any trifling incident to take their attention, and keep their minds alive. Some one with a little more of listening curiosity, but without caring about the subject, might have to observe, that it seemed to him the same kind of thing that the Methodist parson, (the term most likely to be used,) was lately saying in such a one's funeral sermon, It is too possible that one or two of the visages of the company, of the younger people especially, might wear, during a good part of the

time, somewhat of a derisive smile, meaning, "What odd kind of stuff all this is;" as if they could not help thinking it most ludicrously strange, that any one should be talking of God, of the Savior of mankind, of the facts of the Bible, the welfare of the soul, the shortness and value of life, and a future account, when he might be talking of the neighboring fair, past or expected, or the local quarrels, or the last laughable incident or adventure of the hamlet. It is particularly observable, that grossly ignorant persons are very apt to take a ludicrous impression from high and solemn subjects; at least when introduced in any other time or way than in the ceremonial of public religious service; when brought forward as a personal concern, demanding consideration every where, and which may be urged by individual on individual. You have commonly enough observed this provoke the grin of stupidity and folly. And if you asked yourselves, (for it were in vain to ask *them*,) why it produced this so perverse effect, you had only to consider that, to minds abandoned through ignorance to be totally engrossed and besotted by the immediate objects of sense, the grave assumption, and emphatic enforcement, of the transcendent importance of a wholly unseen and spiritual economy, has much the appearance and effect of a great lie attempted to be passed upon them. You might indeed recollect also, that the most that some of them may have learnt about religion, is, that it, and those

who profess it, *may* be laughed at, for that they are so by multitudes, not of their own vulgar order only, but including many of the wealthy, the genteel, the magisterial, and the dignified in point of rank.

Individuals of the most ignorant class may stroll into a place of worship, bearing their character so conspicuously in their appearance and manner as to draw the particular notice of the preacher, while addressing the congregation. It may be, that having taken their stare round the place, they go out, just, perhaps, when he is in the midst of a marked, prominent, and even picturesque illustration, possibly from some of the striking facts or characters of the scripture narrations, which had not made the slightest ingress on their thoughts or imagination. Or they are pleased to stay through the service; during which his eye is frequently led to where several of them may be seated together. Without an appearance of addressing them personally, he shall be excited to direct a special effort toward what he surmises to be the state of their minds. He may in this effort acquire an additional force, emphasis, and pointedness of delivery; but especially his utmost mental force shall be brought into action to strike upon their faculties, with vivid rousing ideas, plainly and briefly expressed. And he fancies, perhaps, that he has at least arrested their attention; that what is going from his mind is in some manner or other taking a place in theirs; when some inexpressibly trivial oc-



curing circumstance shews him, that the hold he has on them is not of the strength of a spider's web. Those thoughts, those intellects, those souls, are instantly and wholly gone—from a representation of one of the awful visitations of divine judgment in the ancient world—a description of sublime angelic agency, as in some recorded fact in the bible—an illustration of the discourse, miracles, or expiatory sorrows of the Redeemer of the world—a strong appeal to conscience on past sin—a statement, in form, perhaps, of example, of an important duty in given circumstances—a cogent enforcement of some specific point as of most essential moment in respect to eternal safety;—from the attempted grasp, or supposed seizure, of any such subject, these rational spirits started away, with infinite facility, to the movements occasioned by the falling of a hat from a peg.

By the time that any semblance of attention returns, the preacher's address may have taken the form of pointed interrogation, with very defined supposed facts, or even real ones, to give the question and its principle as it were a tangible substance. Well; just at the moment when his questions converged to a point, which was to have been a dart of conviction striking the understanding, and compelling the common sense and conscience of the auditors to answer for themselves,—at that moment, he perceives two or three of the persons he had particularly in view begin in active whispering, prolonged with the accompaniment of the appropriate

vulgar smiles. They may possibly relapse at length, through sheer dullness, into tolerable decorum; and the instructor, not quite losing sight of them, tries yet again to impel some serious ideas through the obtuseness of their mental being. But he can clearly perceive, after the animal spirits have thus been a little quieted by the necessity of sitting still awhile, the signs of a perfectly stupid vacancy, which is hardly sensible that any thing is actually saying, and probably makes, in the case of some of the individuals, what is mentally but a slight transition to yawning and sleep.

Utter ignorance is a most effectual fortification to a vicious state of the mind. Prejudice may perhaps be removed; unbelief may be reasoned with; even demoniacs have been capable of bearing witness to the truth; but the stupidity of confirmed ignorance, not only defeats the ultimate efficacy of the means for making men wiser and better, but stands in preliminary defiance to the very act of their application. It reminds us of an account, in one of the relations of the French Egyptian campaigns, of the attempt to reduce a garrison posted in a bulky fort of mud. Had the defences been of timber, the besiegers might have burnt them; had they been of stone, even blocks of granite, they might have shaken and ultimately breached them by the incessant battery of their cannon; or they might have undermined and blown them up. But the huge mound of mud received the iron missiles with-

out effect; they just struck in and were dead; so that the mighty engines of attack and demolition were utterly baffled.

The most melancholy of the exemplifications of the effect of ignorance, as constituting an incapacity for receiving religious instruction, have been presented to those, who have visited persons thus devoid of knowledge in sickness and the approach to death. Supposing them to manifest alarm and solicitude, it is deplorable to see how powerless their understandings are, for any distinct conception of what, or why, it is that they fear, or regret, or desire. The objects of their apprehension come round them as vague forms of darkness, instead of distinctly exhibited dangers and foes, which they might steadily contemplate, and think how to escape or encounter. And how little does the benevolent instructor find it possible for him to do, when he applies his mind to the painful task, of reducing this gloomy confused vision to the plain defined truth of their unhappy situation, set in order before their eyes.

He deems it necessary to speak of the most elementary principles—the perfect holiness, and justice of God—the corresponding holiness, and the all-comprehending extent, of his law, appointed to his creatures—the absolute duty of conformity to it in every act, word, and thought—the necessary condemnation consequent on failure—the dreadful evil, therefore of sin, both in its principle and consequences. God—perfect holiness—justice—law—universal con-

formity—sin—condemnation! Alas! the hapless auditor has no such sense of the force of terms, and no such analogical ideas, as to furnish the medium for conveying these representations to his understanding. He never had, at any time; and now there may be in his mind all the additional confusion, and incapacity of fixed attention, arising from pain, debility, and sleeplessness. All this therefore passes before him with a tenebrious glimmer, and is gone; like lightning faintly penetrating to a man behind a thick black curtain.

The instructor attempts a personal application, endeavoring to give the disturbed conscience a rational direction, and a distinct cognizance. But he finds, as he might expect to find, that a conscience without knowledge has never taken but a very small portion of the man's habits of life under its jurisdiction; and that it seems a most hopeless thing to attempt to send it back reinforced, to reclaim and conquer, through all the past, the whole extent of its rightful but never assumed dominion. As conscience has not necessarily received, by its present alarm, the benefit of a larger exercise of the understanding, it is absolutely incapable of admitting the monitor's estimate of the measure of guilt involved in omission, and in an irreligious state of the mind, as a dreadful addition to the account of criminal action. The person is totally and honestly unable to conceive of substantial guilt in any thing of which he can ask, what injury it has done to any

body. This single point—whether positive harm has been done to any one,—comprehends the whole essence and sum of the conscious accountableness of very ignorant people. As to a duty absolute in the nature of things, of a duty as owing to themselves, or a duty as imposed by the Almighty,—*that their minds should be in a certain prescribed state*,—there does really require a perfectly new manner of the action of intellect to enable them to descry its existence. Material wrong, *very* material wrong, to their fellow mortals, they are sensible they should not do; it is very little further than so, that a sense of being amenable even to God is distinctly admitted; beyond that, they are absolved from jurisdiction; they are their own property, without an obligation even to themselves, as to the manner in which the possession may be held and ordered. The effect of their having thus habitually made nothing of the state of the mind, now meets the supposed instructor. He presses on this side of the province of conscience, on account of its vast importance; and partly, too, because he would avoid, except in a case of notoriously bad character, the invidiousness of seeming directly to reproach the sick man's outward conduct. But to give in an hour the understanding which it requires the discipline of many years to render competent! How vain the attempt! The man's sense of guilt fixes almost exclusively on something that has been improper in his practical courses. He professes to acknowledge the

evil of this; and perhaps with a certain stress of expression, intended, by an apparent correspondence to the serious emphasis which the monitor is laying on another part of the accountableness and guilt, to take him off from thus endeavoring, as it appears to the ignorant sufferer, to make him more of a sinner than there is any reason. By continuing to insist on the subject, the instructor may find himself in danger of being regarded as having taken upon him the unkind office of accuser in his own name, and of his own will and authority.

In the inculcation of the necessity of repentance, he will perceive the indistinctness of apprehension, respecting the difference between that kind of forced recoil from sin which is caused by dread of impending consequences, and the antipathy to its essential nature. And even if this distinction, which admits of very easy forms of exemplification, should thus be rendered in a degree perceptible in itself, the man cannot make the application. The instructor observes, as one of the most striking results of a want of disciplined mental exercise, an utter inability for self-inspection. There is before his eyes, looking at him, but a stranger to himself, a man on whose mind no other minds, except one, can shed a light of self-manifestation, to save him from the most fatal mistakes.

If the monitor would turn, (rather from an impulse to leave the gloom of the scene, than

from any thing he sees even faintly approaching toward a right apprehension of the austerer truths of religion,) if he would turn his efforts, to the effect of directing on this dark spirit the benign rays of the christian redemption, what is he to do for terms,—yes, for very terms? Mediator, sacrifice, atonement, satisfaction; faith, reliance; even the expression believing in Christ; merit of the death of Christ, acquittal, acceptance, justification:—he knows, or will soon learn, that he might as well talk in the language of the occult sciences. And he is forced down to such expedients of grovelling paraphrase, and humiliating analogy, that he becomes sensible his method of endeavoring to make a divine subject intelligible, is to divest it of all its radiance, and reduce it, in order that it may not confound, to the rank of things which have not majesty enough to impress with awe. And after this has been done, to the utmost of his ability, and to the unavoidable weariness of his suffering auditor, he is distressed to think of the proportion between any such slight ideas as this man's mind now possesses of the economy of redemption, and the stupendous magnitude of the interest in which he stands dependent on it. Some crude sentiment, as, that he “hopes Jesus Christ will stand his friend;” that it was very good of the Savior to think of us; that he wishes he knew what to do to get his help; that Jesus Christ has done him good in other things, and he

hopes he will now again at the last;\*—such expressions will afford little to alleviate the gloomy feelings, with which the serious visitor descends from the chamber in which, perhaps, a few days after, he hears that the man he conversed with is a dead body.

But such benevolent visitors have to tell of still more melancholy exemplifications of the effects of ignorance in the close of life. They have seen the neglect of early cultivation, and the subsequent estrangement from all knowledge and thinking, except about business and folly, result in such a stupefaction of mind, that irreligious and immoral persons, approaching death, and fully aware that they were, and by no means in a state of physical lethargy, were absolutely incapable of being alarmed at the near approach of death. They did not deny, nor in the infidel sense disbelieve, what was said to them of the awfulness of that event, and its consequences; but they had actually never thought enough of death to have any solemn associations with the idea. And their faculties were become so rigid, so stiffened, as it were, they could not now acquire them; no, not while the portentous spectre was unveiling his visage to them, in near and still nearer approach; not when the element of another

\* Such an expression as this would hardly have occurred but from recollection of fact, in the instance of an aged farmer, (the owner of the farm,) in his last illness. In the way of reassuring his somewhat doubtful hope that Christ would not fail him when now had recourse to, at his extreme need, he said, (to the writer,) "Jesus Christ has sent me a deal of good crops."



world was beginning to penetrate to their souls, through the rents of their mortal tabernacle. It appeared that literally their thoughts *could not* go out from what they had been through life immersed in, to contemplate, (with any realizing feeling,) a grand change of being, expected so soon to take place. They could not go to the fearful brink to look off. It was a stupor of the soul not to be awaked but by the actual plunge into the realities of eternity. In such a case, there probably appeared the instinctive repugnance to death. But the feeling was, If it must be so, there is no help for it; and as to what may come after, we must take our chance. In this temper and manner, we recollect a sick man, of this untaught class, answering the inquiry how he felt himself, "Getting worse; I suppose I shall make a die of it." And his pious neighbors, earnestly exhorting him to solemn concern and preparation, could not make him sensible there was occasion for any extraordinary disturbance of mind. And yet this man was not inferior to those around him in sense for the common business of life.

After a tedious length of suffering, and when death is plainly inevitable, it is not very uncommon for the persons under this infatuation to express a wish for its arrival, simply as a deliverance from what they are enduring, without troubling themselves with a thought of what may follow. "I hope it will please God soon to release me," was the expression, to his reli-

gious medical attendant, of such an ignorant and insensible mortal, within an hour of his death, which was evidently and directly brought on by his vices. And he uttered it without a word, or the smallest indicated emotion, of penitence or solicitude; though he had passed his life in a neighborhood abounding with the public means of religious instruction and warning.

When earnest, persisting, and seriously menacing admonitions, of pious visitors or friends, almost literally compel such unhappy persons to some precise recognition of the subject, their answers will often be faithfully representative, and a consistent completion, of their course through mental darkness, from childhood to the mortal hour. We recollect the instance of a wicked old man, who, within that very hour, replied to the urgent admonitions, by which a religious neighbor felt it a painful duty to make a last effort to alarm him, "What, do you believe that God can think of damning me because I may have been as bad as other folk? I am sure he will do no such thing: he is far too good for that."

We cannot close this detailed illustration of so gloomy a subject, without again adverting to a rare, it is true, but most admirable phenomenon, for which the observers may, if they choose, go round the whole circle of their philosophy, and begin again, to find any adequate cause, other than the most immediate agency of the Almighty Spirit. Here and there an

instance occurs to the delight of the christian philanthropist, of a person brought up in utter ignorance and barbarian rudeness, and so continuing till late, sometimes very late in life; and then, at last, after the long petrifying, effect of time and habit, suddenly seized upon by a mysterious power, and taken, with an alarming and irresistible force, out of the dark hold in which the spirit has lain imprisoned and torpid, into the sphere of thought and feeling.

This we notice, not so much to show how far a divine influence surpasses all other applications to the human mind, as for the purpose of again remarking, how wonderfully this great moral change may affect the obtuse intellectual faculties; which it appears, in the most signal of these instances, almost to create anew. It is exceedingly striking to observe how the contracted rigid soul seems to soften, and grow warm, and expand, and quiver with life. With the new energy infused, it painfully struggles to work itself into freedom, from the wretched contortion in which it has so long been fixed, as by the impressed spell of some infernal magic. It has been seen filled with a painful and indignant emotion at its own ignorance; actuated with a restless earnestness to be informed; acquiring an unwonted applicableness of its faculties to thought; attaining a perception, combined of intelligence and moral sensibility, to which numerous things are becoming discernible and affecting, that were as non-existent before. It is not in the very utmost strength of

their import that we employ such terms of description; but we have known instances in which the change, the intellectual change, has been so conspicuous, within a brief space of time, that even an infidel observer must have forfeited all claim to be esteemed a man of sense, if he would not acknowledge,—This that you call divine grace, whatever it may really be, is the strangest awakener of faculties after all. And to a devout man, it is a spectacle of most enchanting beauty thus to see the immortal plant, which has been under a malignant blast while sixty or seventy years have passed over it, coming out at length in the bloom of life.

We cannot hesitate to draw the inference, that if religion is so auspicious to the intellectual faculties, the cultivation and exercise of those faculties must be of great advantage to religion.

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## SECTION II.

*Mischievous operation of ignorance in disposing the mind to receive every species of absurdity as religious truth.*

PERHAPS we should not finally dismiss the subject of the effect of ignorance, as creating an incapacity of receiving religious instruction, without just noticing its mischievous operation on many who are disposed to attend to such in-

struction, in fitting their minds to receive, as religious truth, all manner of absurdities.

We have expressly said, (what indeed did not need to be said,) that such a noble exemplification as above described, is very rare. If we come down to a very considerably lower degree, we shall find the examples numerous, among the uneducated subjects of genuine religion, of persons remarkably improved in the power and exercise of their reason; and we may assume that *some* share of this improvement reaches to all who are really under this most beneficent influence in the creation.\* But still it must be acknowledged of too many, who are in a measure, we may candidly believe, under the genuine efficacy of religion, that they have attained, under its influence, but so diminutive a proportion of the improvement of intellect, that they can be well pleased with a great deal of absurdity of religious notions and language. While, however, we confess and regret that it is so, we should not overlook the obvious causes and excuses for it; partly in the constitution of the mind, partly in extraneous circumstances. Many whose attention is in honest earnestness drawn to religion, are naturally endowed with so scanty a portion of the

\* *Really* under this influence, we repeat, pointedly; for we justly put all others out of the account. It is nothing, as against our asserted principle or fact, that great numbers who may contribute to swell a public bustle about religion, who may run together at the call of whim imposture, or insanity, assuming that name; who may acquire, instead of any other folly, a turn for talking, disputing, or ranting, about that subject; it is nothing, in short, that *any*, who are not in real conscientious seriousness the disciples of religion, can be shewn to be no better for it, in point of improved understanding.

thinking power, strictly so denominated, that it would have required high cultivation to raise them to the level of very moderate understanding. There are some who appear to have a natural invincible tendency to an uncouth fantastic mode of forming their notions. It is in the nature of others, that whatever cultivation they might have received, it would still have been by their passions, rather than, in any due proportion, by their reason, that an important concern would have taken and retained hold of them. In the case of too many, there may have been associated with the causes of their first effectual religious impressions, with the instructions and instructors, perhaps, that first drew them into the full interest of the subject, circumstances unfortunately tending to prevent a sound rational discipline, of the understanding which was coming into exercise on that subject.

Now suppose all these worthy persons, with these circumstances against them, to be also under the one great sad calamity of an utterly neglected education; and is it any wonder they can receive with approbation, a great deal of what is a heavy disgrace to the name of religious doctrine and ministration? Where is the wonder, that crudeness of conception should not disappoint and offend minds that have not, ten times since they came into the world, been compelled to form two ideas with precision, and then combine them with strictness, beyond the narrow scope of their ordinary pursuits? Where is the wonder, if many such persons take noise

and fustian, for something zealous and something lofty; if they mistake a wheedling cant for affectionate solicitude; if they defer to pompous egotism and dogmatical assertion, from the obvious interest, which those who cannot inquire much for themselves, have to believe their teacher is an oracle; if they are delighted with whimsical conceits as strokes of discovery and surprise, and yet at the same time are pleased with common-place, and endless repetition, as an exemption from mental effort; and if they are gratified by vulgarity of diction and illustration, as bringing religion to the level where they are at home? Nay, if an artful pretender, or half lunatic visionary, or some poor set of dupes of their own inflated self-importance, should give out, that they are come into the world for the manifestation, at last, of true Christianity, which the divine revelation has failed, till their advent, to explain to any of the numberless devout and sagacious examiners of it, what is there in the minds of the most ignorant class of the persons desirous to secure the benefits of religion, that can be relied on to certify them, that they shall not forego the greatest blessing ever offered to them by setting at nought these pretensions?

It is grievous to think there should be a large and almost perpetual stream of words, conveying crudities, extravagances, arrogant dictates of ignorance, pompous nothings, vulgarities, catches of idle fantasy, and impertinences of the speaker's vanity, as religious instruction, to

assemblages of ignorant people. But then, how to turn this current away, to waste itself, as it deserves, in the swamps of the solitary desert? The thing to be wished is, that it were possible to put some strong coercion on the *minds*, (we deprecate all other restraint,) of the teachers, a compulsion to feel the necessity of information, sense, disciplined thinking, the correct use of words, and the avoidance at once of soporific formality and wild excess. There are signs of amendment, certainly; but while the passion of human beings for notoriety lasts, (which will be yet a considerable time,) there will not fail to be men, in any number required, ready to exhibit in religion, in any manner in which the people are willing to be pleased with them. The effectual method will be, to take the matter in the inverted order, and endeavor to secure that those who assemble to be taught, shall already have learnt so much *by other means*, as to impose upon their teachers the necessity of wisdom. But by what other means, except the discipline of the best education possible to be given to them, and the subsequent voluntary self-improvement to which it may be hoped that such an education would often lead?

We cannot dismiss this topic, of the unhappy effect of extreme ignorance on persons religiously disposed, in rendering them both liable and inclined to receive their ideas of the highest subject in a disorderly, perverted, and debased form, mixed largely with other men's folly and their own, without again remarking a pleasing



testimony to the connexion between genuine religion and intelligence. It arises from the fact, apparent to any discriminating observer, that, as a general rule, the most truly pious of the illiterate disciples of religion, those who have the most of its devotional feeling, do certainly manifest more of the operation of judgment in their religion than is evinced by those of less solemn and devout sentiment. The former will unquestionably be found, when on a level as to the measure of natural faculty and the want of previous cultivation, to shew more discernment, to be less captivated by noise and extravagance, and more intent on really understanding *what it is* that they profess to believe and love.

Thus we have endeavored, we are afraid with too much prolixity and repetition, to describe the evils attendant on a neglected state of the minds of the people. The representation is far enough from comprehending all those even of magnitude and prominence; but it displays that portion of them which is the most serious and calamitous, as being the effect which the people's ignorance has on their moral and religious interests. And we think no one who has attentively surveyed the state and character of the lower orders of the community, in this country, will impute exaggeration to the picture. It is rather to be feared that the reality is of much darker shade; and that a more strikingly gloomy exhibition might be formed, by such a process as the following:—

That a certain number, twenty, or less or more, of the most observant of the religious philanthropic persons, who have had most intercourse with the classes in question, for the purposes of instruction, charitable aid, or perhaps of furnishing employment, should relate the most characteristic circumstances and anecdotes within their own experience, illustrative of this mental and moral condition; and that these should be arranged, without any comment, under the respective heads of the preceding sketch, or of a more comprehensive enumeration. Let each of them repeat, in so many words, the most notable things he had heard uttered as expressing notions of Deity, or any part of religion; or respecting the ground and extent of duty and accountableness; or the termination of life, and a future retribution. Let the recital include both the expressions of individual conception, and those of the most prevailing maxims and common-places; and let them be the sayings of persons in health, and of those languishing and dying. Then let there be produced a numerous assortment of characteristic samples of practical conduct; conduct not alone proceeding, in a general way, from corrupt disposition; but bearing the special marks of the cast and direction given to that disposition by extreme ignorance. The assemblage of things thus recounted, when the actual circumstances were also added of the wretchedness corresponding and inseparable, would constitute such an exhibition of fact, as

any description of those evils in general terms would incur the charge of rhetorical excess in attempting to rival. We can well imagine, that some of these persons of large experience may have accompanied us through the foregoing series of illustrations with a feeling, that they could have displayed the subject with a more impressive prominence.

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### SECTION III.

*The preceding remarks exemplified by the condition of England.*

AND now again the grievous reflection comes upon us, that all this is the description of a large portion of the people of our own nation. Of this nation, the theme of so many lofty strains of panegyric. Of this nation, stretching forth its powers in ambitious enterprize, with infinite pride and cost, to all parts of the globe;—just as if a family were seen eagerly intent on making some new appropriation, or going out to maintain some competition or feud with its neighbors, or mixing perhaps in the strife of athletic games, or drunken frays, at the very time that several of its members are lying dead in the house. So that the fame of the nation resounded, and its power made itself felt, in every clime, it was not worth a consideration

that a vast proportion of its people were systematically consigned, through ignorance and its inseparable irreligion and depravities, to wretchedness and even final perdition. It is matter for never-ending amazement, that during one generation after another, the presiding wisdom in this chief of Christian and Protestant States, should have thrown out the living strength of that state, into almost every mode of agency under heaven, rather than that of promoting the state itself to the condition of a happy community of cultivated beings. What stupendous infatuation, what disastrous ascendancy of the Power of Darkness, that this energy should have been sent forth to pervade all parts of the world in quest of objects, to inspirit and accomplish innumerable projects, political and military, and to lavish itself, even to exhaustion and fainting at its vital source, on every alien interest; while here, at home, a great portion of the social body was in a moral and intellectual sense dying and putrefying over the land. And it was thus perishing for want of the vivifying principle of knowledge, which one fifth part of this mighty amount of exertion would have been sufficient to diffuse into every corner and cottage of the island. Within its circuit, a countless multitude were seen passing away their mortal existence little better, in any view, than mere sentient shapes of matter, and by their depravity inexpressibly worse; and yet this hideous fact had not the weight of the very "dust of the balance," in

the deliberation, whether a grand exertion of the national vigor and resource could have any object so worthy, (with God for the Judge, the while,) as some scheme of foreign aggrandisement, some interference in remote quarrels, an avengement, by anticipation, of wrongs pretended to be foreseen, or the obstinate prosecution of some fatal career, begun in the very levity of pride, or from the casual ascendancy of some perverse and irritated individual or party.

The national *honor*, perhaps, would be alleged, in a certain matter of punctilio, for the necessity of undertakings of incalculable consumption, by men who could see no national *disgrace* in the circumstance, that several millions of the persons composing the nation could not read the ten commandments. Or the national *safety* has been pleaded, to a similar purpose, in terms of patriotic emphasis, upon some very slight symptoms of danger; and the pleaders would have suspected alienation of mind in any adviser suggesting,—“Do you, instead, apply your best efforts, and the nation’s means, to raise the barbarous population from their ignorance and debasement, and you really may venture some little trust in Divine Providence for the nation’s safety, meanwhile.”

If a serious and religious man, looking back through one or two centuries, were enabled to take, with an adequate comprehension of intellect, the sum and value of so much of the astonishing course of the national exertions of this

country, as the Supreme Judge has put to the criminal account of pride and ambition; and if he could then place in contrast to the transactions on which that mighty amount has been expended, a sober estimate of what so *much* exerted vigor *might* have accomplished, for the intellectual and moral exaltation of the people, it could not be without an emotion of horror that he would say, Who is to be accountable, who *has been* accountable, for this difference? He would no longer wonder at any plagues and judgments, which may have been inflicted on such a state. And he would solemnly adjure all those, especially, who profess in a peculiar manner to feel the power of the Christian Religion, to beware how they implicate themselves, by avowed or even implied approbation, in what must be a matter of fearful account before the highest tribunal. For *some or other* persons, such a course *must* have been a matter of account. Such a moral agency could not throw off its responsibility into the air, to be dissipated and lost, like the black smoke of forges or volcanoes. This one grand thing, (the improvement of the people,) left undone, while a thousand arduous things have been done or strenuously endeavored, cannot be less than an awful charge *somewhere*. And where?—but on all who have voluntarily co-operated and concurred in systems and schemes, which could deliberately put *such* a thing last? Last! nay, not even that; for they have, till recently, as we have seen, thrown it

almost wholly out of consideration. A long succession of men are gone to this audit. Let the rest beware.

We were supposing a thoughtful man to draw out to his view a parallel and contrast, exhibiting, on the one side, the series of objects on which, during several ages, an enormous exertion of the national energy has been directed; and on the other, those improvements of the people which might have been effected by so much of that exertion as he deems to have been wasted. In this process, he might often be inclined to single out particular parts and points in the disapproved series, to be put in special contrast over against the possibilities on the opposite line. For example; there perhaps occurs to his view some island, of inconsiderable extent, the haunt of pestilence, rendered productive solely by means involving the most flagrant iniquity; an iniquity which it avenges by opening a premature grave for many of his countrymen, and being a most powerful moral corrupter of others. Such a blasted spot, nevertheless, may have been one of the most material objects of a widely destructive war, which has in effect sunk incalculable treasure in the sea, and in the sands, ditches and fields of plague-infested shores; with a dreadful sacrifice too of blood, life, and all the best moral feelings and habits. Its possession, perhaps, was the prize and triumph of all the grand exertion; the equivalent for all the cost, misery, and crime.

Or there may occur to him the name of some fortress, in a less remote region, where the Christian nations seem to have vied with one another which of them should deposit the greatest number of victims, securely kept in the charge of death, to rise and testify for them, at the last day, how much they have been governed by the peaceful spirit of their professed religion. He reads that his countrymen, conjoined with others, have battled round this fortress, wasting the vicinity, but richly manuring the soil with blood. They have co-operated in hurling upon the abodes of thousands of inhabitants within its walls, a thunder and lightning incomparably more destructive than that of nature; and have put fire and earthquake under the fortifications; shouting, "to make the welkin ring," at sight of the consequent ruin and chasm, which have opened an entrance for hostile rage. They have taken the place,—and then they have surrendered it. The next year perhaps they have taken it again; to be again at last given up, upon compulsion or in the acknowledgment of right, to the very same party to which it had belonged previously to all this horrible commotion. The operations in this local and very narrow portion of the grand affray of monarchies, he may calculate to have cost his country, as much as the amount earned by the toils of the whole life of all the inhabitants of one of its considerable towns; if he can set aside from his view, long enough for such a mere pecuniary reckoning, the more por-



tentious part of the account,—the carnage, the crimes, and the devastation committed on the foreign tract, the place of abode of people who had little interest in the contest, and no power to prevent it. And why was all this? He may not be able to divest himself of the principles that should rule the judgment of a moralist and a christian, in order to think like a statesman; and therefore may find no better reason than that, when despots would quarrel, Britain must take the occasion to prove itself a great power, by bearing a high hand amidst their rivalries; though this should be at the expense of having the scene at home chequered between children learning little more than how to curse, and old persons dying without knowing how to put words together to pray.

The question may have been, in one part of the world or another, which of two wicked individuals of the same family, competitors for sovereign authority, should be actually invested with it, they being equal in the qualifications and dispositions to make the worst use of it. And the decision of such a question was worthy, that England should expend what remained of her depressed strength from previous exertions of it in some equally meritorious cause.

Or the supposed reviewer of our history may find, somewhere in his retrospect, that a certain brook or swamp in a wilderness, or stripe of waste, or settlement of boundaries in respect to some insignificant traffic, was difficult of adjustment between jealous, irritated, and mu-

tually incursive neighbors; and therefore national honor and interest equally required that war should be lighted up, sea and land, through several quarters of the globe. Or a dissension may have arisen upon the matter of some petty tax on an article of commerce: an absolute *will* had been rashly signified on the subject; pride had committed itself, and was peremptory for persisting; and the resolution was to be prosecuted through a wide tempest of destruction protracted perhaps many years; and only terminating in the loss, as to the leading power concerned, of infinitely more than this "last fatal arbitrement" had been determined on as the means of maintaining;—besides the absolutely fathomless amount of every kind of cost in this progress to final frustration.—But there would be no end of recounting facts of this order.

Now the comparative estimator has to set against a large array of things of this character, the forms of imagined good, which might, during the ages of this retrospect, have been realized by an incomparably less exhausting series of exertion, an exertion, indeed, continually renovating its own resources. Imagined good, we said;—alas! the evil stands in long and awful display on the ground of history; the hypothetical good presents itself as but a dream; with this difference, that there is resting on the conscience of beings somewhere still existing, an eternal accountableness for its not having been a reality.

For such an *island*, as we have supposed our comparer to read of, he can, in imagination, look on a space of proportional extent in any part of his native country, taking a district as a detached section of a general national picture. And he can figure to himself the result, resplendent upon this tract, of so much energy there beneficently expended as that island had cost: an energy, we mean, *equivalent in measure*; while in the infinitely different *mode* of an exertion, by all appropriate means, to improve the reason, manners, and morals of the people. What a prevalence of intelligence, what a delightful civility of deportment, what repression and almost disappearance of the most gross obtrusive forms of vice, what domestic decorum, attentive education of the children, gravity and understanding in attendance on public offices of religion, sense and good order in assemblages for the assertion and exercise of civil and political rights!

We were supposing his attention fixed awhile on the recorded operations against a strongly fortified place, in a region marked through every part with the traces and memorials of the often renewed conflicts of the christian states. And we suppose him to make a collective mixed estimate of all kinds of human ability put forth around and against that particular devoted place, as a detached portion of the whole enormous quantity of exertion, expended by his country in all that region, in the campaigns of a war, or of a century's wars. He may then again

endeavor, by a rule of equivalence, to conceive the same amount of exertion in quite another way; to imagine human forces equal in *quantity* to all that putting forth of strength, physical, mental, and financial, for annoyance and destruction, expended, instead, in the operation of effecting the utmost improvement which they *could* effect, in the mental cultivation and the morals of the inhabitants of one large town in his own country.

In figuring to himself the channels and instrumentality, through which this great stream of energy might pass into this operation, he will soon have many specific means presented to his view: Schools, of the most perfect appointment, in every section and corner of the town; a system of friendly, but cogent and peremptory dealing, with all the people of inferior condition, relatively to the necessity of their practical accordance to the plans of education;\* an exceedingly copious supply, for individual possession, of the best books of elementary knowledge, accompanied, as we need not say, by the sacred volume; a number of assortments of useful and pleasing books for circulation, established under strict order, and with appointments of honorary and other rewards to those who gave evidence of having made the best use

\* It is here most confidently presumed, that any man who looks, in a right state of his senses, at the manner in which the children are still brought up, in many parts of the land, will hear with unlimited contempt any hypocritical protest against so much interference with the discretion, the liberty, of parents;—the discretion, the liberty, forsooth, of bringing up their children a nuisance on the face of the earth!

of them; a number of places of resort where various branches of the most generally useful and attainable knowledge and arts should be explained and applied, by every expedient of familiar, practical, and entertaining illustration, admitting a degree of co-operation by those who attended to see and hear; and an abundance of commodious places for religious instruction on the sabbath, where there should be intelligent and zealous men to impart it. Our speculator has a good right to suppose a high degree of these qualifications in his public teachers of religion, when he is to imagine something parallel in this department to the skill and ardor displayed in the supposed military operations. He may add to such an apparatus, a police, (if we may employ that rather ungracious term,) faithful and vigilant against every cognizable form of neglect and immorality. And besides all this, there will be a great variety of undefined and optional activity of benevolent, and intelligent men of local influence.

Under so auspicious a combination of discipline, he will not indeed fancy, in his transient vision, that he beholds Athens revived; but he will, in sober consistency, we think, with what is known of the relation of cause and effect, imagine a place surpassing any actual town or city now on earth. And let it be distinctly kept in view, that to produce the effect exhibited in this ideal spectacle, he is just supposing to have been expended, on the population of the town, a measure of exertion and means

equal, (as far as agencies in so different a form and direction can be brought to a rule of comparative estimate,) to what has been expended by his country in investing, battering, undermining, burning, taking, and perhaps retaking, one particular foreign town, in one or several campaigns.

If he should perchance be sarcastically questioned, how he can allow himself in so strange a conceit as that of supposing such a quantity of moral forces concentrated to act in one exclusive spot, while the rest of the country remained under the old course of things; or in such an absurdity as that of fancying that *any* quantity of those forces could effectually raise one local section of the people eminently aloft, while continuing surrounded and unavoidably in constant intercourse with the general mass, remaining still sunk in degradation—he has to reply, that he is fancying no such thing. For while he is thus converting, in imagination, the military exertions against one foreign town, into intellectual and moral operations on one town at home, why may he not, in similar imagination, make a whole country correspond to a whole country? He may conceive the grand incalculable amount of exertion made by his country in marshal operations over all that wide foreign territory of which he has selected a particular spot, to have been, on the contrary, expended in the supposed beneficent process on the great scale of this whole nation. Then would the supposed popular improvement in

the one particular town, so far from being a strange insulated phenomenon, absurd to be conceived as existing in exception and total contrast to the general state of the people, be but a portion and specimen of that state.

He may proceed along the series of such confronted representations as far as bitter mortification will let him. But he will soon be sick of this process of comparison. And how sick will he thenceforward be, to perpetual loathing, of the vain raptures with which an immoral and antichristian patriotism can review a long history of what it will call national glory, acquired by national energy ambitiously consuming itself in a continual succession and unlimited extent of extraneous operations, of that kind which has been the grand curse of the human race ever since the time of Cain; while the one thing needful of national welfare, the very *summum bonum* of a state, has been regarded with contemptuous indifference.

These observations are not made on any assumption, that England could in all cases have kept clear of implication in foreign interests, and remote and sanguinary contests. But they are made on the assumption of what is admitted and deplored by every thoughtful religious man, whose understanding and moral sense are not wretchedly prostrated in homage to a prevailing system, and chained down by a superstition that dare not question the wisdom and probity of high national authorities and counsels. What is so admitted and deplored by

the true and christian patriots is, that this nation has gone to an awfully criminal extent beyond the line of necessity; that it has been extremely prompt to find occasions for appearing again, and still again, in array for the old work of waste and death; and that, taking into the account the high advantage enjoyed by its preponderating classes for forming a religious judgment, it has shewn during several generations and down into our own age, an astonishing insensibility to the dictates of christianity and the warning of accountableness to the Sovereign Judge.

These observations assume, too, with perfect confidence, that there CANNOT be, in the world, any such thing as a nation habitually absolved from the duty of raising its people from brutish ignorance, in consideration of a necessity and duty of expending its vigor and means in foreign enterprise. The concern of redeeming the people from a besotted condition of their reason and conscience, is a duty at all events and to an entire certainty; is a duty imperative and absolute; and any pretended necessity for such a direction of the national exertion as would be incompatible with a paramount attention to this, must be an imposition too gross to furnish an excuse for being imposed on.



## SECTION IV.

*Indications of a better age approaching—with remarks on some visionary projects, for meliorating the condition of mankind.*

SUCH as we have described has been, for ages, the degraded state of the multitude. And such has been the indifference manifested in regard to it by the superior, the refined, the ascendent portion of the community; who, generally speaking, could see these sharers with them of the dishonored human nature, in endless numbers around them, in the city and the field, without its ever flashing on conscience that on them was lying a solemn accountableness, destined to press one day with all its weight, for what excluded these beings from the sphere of rational existence. It never occurred to many of them as a question of the smallest moment, in what manner the mind might live in all these bodies, if only it were there in competence to make them efficient as machines and implements. Contented to be gazed at, to be envied, or to be regarded as too high even for envy, and to have the rough business of the world performed by these inhalers of the vital air, they perhaps thought, if they reflected at all on the subject, that the best and most privi-

leged state of such beings was to be in the least possible degree morally responsible; and that therefore it would but be doing them an injury to enlarge their knowledge. And might not the thought be suggested at some moment, (see how many things may be envied in their turns!) how happy *they* should be, if with the vast superiority of their advantages they could be just as little accountable? And yet even at such moments, they were little thinking how much it *was* for which they would, in consequence of those advantages, be summoned to answer; little anticipating they should ever be arraigned on a charge, to which they would vainly wish to be permitted to plead, "Were we our brothers' keepers?" If an office designated by those terms, had been named to them as forming a part of their duty, their thoughts might have beaten about in various conjectures and protracted perplexity, before it had come explicitly to their apprehension, that the objects of that office were in a peculiar manner the understandings, principles, and consciences, of the vulgar mass.—We repeat that we speak generally, and not universally.

But we think a great revolution is evidently beginning; a far more important one, by its higher principle and more expansive and beneficent consequences, than the ordinary events of that name. What have commonly been the matter and circumstance of revolutions? The last deciding blow in a deadly competition of equally selfish parties; actions and re-actions

of ambition and revenge; the fiat of a predominating potentate or conqueror; a burst of blind fury, suddenly sweeping away an old despotism, but overwhelming, too, all attempts to substitute a better institution; plots, massacres, battles, dethronements, restorations: all ordinary things. How little of the sublime of moral agency has there been, with one or two partial exceptions, in these mighty commotions; how little wisdom or virtue, or reference to the Supreme Patron of national interests; how little nobleness or even distinctness of purpose, or consolidated advantage of success! But here is a revolution with different phenomena. It displays its quality and project in activities, of continually enlarging scope and power, for the universal diffusion of the divine revelation; in enterprizes to attempt an opening of the doors of all the immense prison-houses of human spirits in every region; in schemes, (advancing with a more quick and widening impulse into effect than good designs were wont to do in former times,) for rendering education and the possession of valuable knowledge universal; in multiplying exertions, in all official and unofficial forms, for making it impossible to mankind to avoid hearing the voice of religion; and all this taking advantage of the new and powerful movement in the general mind; as earnest bold adventurers have sometimes availed themselves of a formidable torrent to be conveyed whither the stream in its accustomed state would never have carried them; or as we have heard of

heroic assailants seizing the moment of an awful tempest of thunder and lightning, to break through the enemy's lines. These are the insignia by which it may well express disdain to take its rank with ordinary revolutions.

Do these appear but a feeble array, to be recounted as the signs and forces of a great revolution, to the mere political projectors and calculators, whose object is to ameliorate the state and character of the people? And what, alas! can *you* do, we might ask them, by expedients relying on any different class of forces from these? As a preliminary point, how are you to *obtain*, (if your theory of an improved state of the people require that there be obtained in the *first instance*,) any materially altered political arrangements in their favor? In what manner can you promise yourselves to bring into effect a theory, that should presume a hasty concession of privileges to the people by the superior orders of the community, while those orders have to allege in justification of refusal, that the people are so ignorant, and so exceedingly corrupt, as to be totally unfit for the possession of any such privileges, even supposing them, abstractedly speaking, their right?

But suppose the leading classes did *not* refuse any one thing you would ask, for reducing your theory to practice, or to experiment. Suppose the people instated in the fulness of what you would call the privileges rightfully appropriate to their situation in the community;

placed on just such a ground in the great political arrangement as you would wish to claim and vindicate for them, in order to raise them, as you think, to respectability and happiness. Suppose them placed there at this moment; and what then? How,—through what mode of the salutary effect of this change,—are the felicitous consequences to follow? You know, yes, you absolutely know, that a vast majority of the multitude are, at this hour, as wretchedly ignorant, and as dreadfully corrupt, as any of those esteemed their enemies have represented them. Hardly any language on this subject can exceed the odious truth. Nor can any thing on earth be more contemptible than that strain of talking which affects a confidence in their sound judgment, their steady principles, their well ordered dispositions, and so forth; and which in addressing them, adopts phrases of encomium and deference, and makes a kind of boasting in their name, as if in them were to be found the main substance of what there is of sterling worth in the land. It is but an incipient and exceedingly partial appearance of transformation that the most sanguine of us can, as yet, profess to perceive, as the result of all the new and augmenting moral forces in recent times brought into operation; so inveterate, so obdurate, so profound in evil, is that popular condition attempted to be corrected. The great mass is still most deplorably corrupt. And yet you really can, notwithstanding, place it, in imagination, under some *merely* political.

auspicious adjustment which shall act upon it with a more immediate and powerful efficacy of correction, than any alterative influence of higher education and inculcated religion. But how? Through the medium of what principles? Think in what terms you shall name these merely political vitalities, so mighty for a moral regeneration. Would you, perhaps, talk of—the dignified sense of independence; the generous, the liberalizing, the ennobling sentiments of freedom; the self-respect, and conscious responsibility of men in the full exercise of their rights; the manly disdain of what is base; and the innate sense and love of what is worthy and honorable, which would spontaneously develop itself on the removal of certain ungenial circumstances in the political constitution of society, which have had the effect of winter on the moral nature of its inferior portions? It would be difficult to believe you were not aware that all this, in such a manner of putting it forth, is flagrant nonsense.

But perhaps you will say, that your scheme of means for the desired renovation of the state and character of the people, is *not* exclusively political. Your chief power, you own, your Hercules in the operations for placing them on a happier ground, is indeed to be a highly improved form of the political framing together of the national community; because in the attainment of this there would be an end of many bad impressions now strongly and habitually affecting the people, and the commencement of

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as many beneficent influences, to come upon them with a direct immediate action, and an action not merely affecting a proportion of them as individuals, but falling on them generally as one great body. This, you think, would be such a mighty and comprehensive advantage, that it must stand primary in a rational scheme for the grand object. But then, you will say, for subordinate and subsidiary means, to follow in detail, under this chief improver of the people, you do not fail to set a high value on plans of education, and efforts for diffusing the knowledge of religion; that in reality you are never imagining the possibility of the full accomplishment of the object without the assistance of these means: they are always *included* in your speculation, though accounted in it as secondary and instrumental, under the paramount importance of what you must still insist on placing first. Do you say so? Then confess that those persons are right at all events, who are zealous to bring into operation immediately the expedients thus admitted by yourselves to be indispensable somewhere in the process; who will do it as *so much gained at any rate*, in despite of the reluctance of the economy around them to dispose itself into an order, under which the beneficent design might have a greater power and more rapid efficacy. Whatever order of things you would conceive as the most propitious to the improvement of the people, what would that improvement itself consist in, for its most valuable part, but

exactly that which is endeavored to be imparted *now* by the men who will not wait for the fortunate aspects and conjunctions of your political astrology? We should say, which is imparted by them; for they find that in some measure their scheme for infusing that best improvement *can* be brought in contact with the mind of the humbler order, in its juvenile portion; and that already, as from the garment of the Redeemer, a sanative virtue goes out of it. And shall they despise this measure of utility, just because they have reason to wish it were a thousand times as much? They acknowledge with regret the exceedingly limited reach and force of their operations, as compared with the immensity of the assemblage of intellectual and moral existence requiring to be operated upon; but who, nevertheless, are the truer friends of the people,—they, who find an intrinsic value in such means as there are, in the absence of whatever means there are not, and actively exert themselves that the people may be the better *so far*; or you, who rate all means as but cyphers, unless a certain favorite one be at their head; and seem almost content that, till it *shall* be there, the people should remain just as they are for mere evidence that no scheme but yours can do them good?

But some of those persons who, whenever they think of great plans of utility to a nation, inevitably think also of that which directs the nation's organized strength, and of the forms of institution, and of the prevailing spirit, accord-



ing to which that strength is made to act,— have to plead, that it is not on specific circumstances wrong in the political arrangement, that they are resting so much of the emphasis of their regrets or wishes; that it is not from this or that particular formal correction of institutions, that they are imagining, in melancholy musings, how much good might flow to pour life and vigor into the process for reforming and exalting the people. They say, that whatever they might perhaps, on examination, deem wrong in political mechanism, their ungracious feeling toward states, and those who have presided in the management of them, is of this more general and solemn purport,— that those national systems and administrators have never, in the plenitude of immense power, actually wrought to this grand effect, of saving the people from a dreadful mental degradation. It is on this enormous practical failure that they dwell, with such deep displacency, rather than on precise defects in the construction of states, theoretically considered. And then they say, that the contemplation of this fact has the effect of reducing almost to folly, in their view, the little schemes and efforts of individuals directed toward such an object.

Now we earnestly wish it might be granted by the Almighty, that the political institutions of the nations might speedily take a form, and come under an administration, that *would* apply the energy of the state to so sublime a purpose; and we always consider the question whether

they do this, or the degree in which they do it, as the grand test of their merits. But then, we must suggest it to the persons thus on the point of turning the awful omissions of states into a license for individuals to do nothing, to consider what, after all, has been the criminal neglect of which nations in their character of states have been guilty, but the neglect of which the individuals composing them have been guilty. And are individuals *now* absolved from all such responsibility; and the more so, that the conviction of the importance of the object is come upon them with such a new and mighty force? When they say, reproachfully, that the nation in its collective capacity, as a body politic, neglects a most important duty, does this amount to the very same thing as saying that *they* perform their share? In actually not performing it, by what principle do they transfer the blame on the state? Would they, in effect, prostitute the language of religion, and say, In thee we live, move, and have a being? Or, in imitation of what the pagans of the East are rid of all sense of guilt by believing of their gods, namely, that the gods so pervade or rather essentially *constitute* their very faculties and wills, that whatever they do or refuse to do, it is not they, but literally the gods that do it, or refuse,—in imitation of this will these persons account themselves but as particles of matter, actuated and necessitated in all things by a sovereign mythological something denominated the State?

It is not so that they feel with respect to those other interests and projects, which they are really in earnest to promote, though those concerns may lie in no greater proportion than the one in question does within the scope of their individual ability. The incubus has then vanished; and they find themselves in possession of a free agency, and a degree of power which they are by no means disposed to under-rate. What is there then that should reduce them, as individual agents, to such utter and willing insignificance in the present affair? Besides, they may form themselves, in indefinite number, into combination. And is there no power in any collective form in which they can be associated, save just that one in which the aggregation is constituted under the political shape and authority denominated a state? Or does the matter come at last to this, that they grow alarmed in conscience at the high-toned censure they have been stimulated and betrayed to pronounce on the state, for neglect of its greatest duty; that they relapse into the obsequiousness of hesitating, whether to attempt to do good of a kind which that high agent has left undone; that they must wait for the sanction of its great example; that till the "shout of kings is among them" it were better not to march against the vandalism and the paganism which are, the while, quite at their ease, destroying the people?

But if this had always been the way in which private individuals, single or associated, had

accounted of themselves and their possible exertions, in regard to great general improvements, but very few would ever have been accomplished. For the case has commonly been, that the schemes of such improvements have originated with persons not invested with political power; have been urged on by the accession and co-operation of such individuals; and at length slowly and reluctantly acceded to by the holders of the dominion over the community, the last to admit what may long have appeared to the majority of thinking men, no less than demonstrative evidence of the propriety and advantage of the reformation.

In all probability, the improvement of mankind is destined, under Divine Providence, to advance just in proportion as good men feel the responsibility for it resting on themselves, *as individuals*, and are actuated by a bold sentiment of independence, (humble, at the same time, in reference to the necessity of a celestial agency,) in the prosecution of it. Each person who is standing still to look, with grief or indignation, at the evils which are overrunning the world, would do well to recollect what he may have read of some gallant partizan, who, perceiving where a prompt movement, with the force at his own command, would make an impression infallibly tending to the success of the warfare, could not endure to lose the time till some great sultan should find it convenient to come in slow march, and the

pomp of state, to take on him the general direction of the campaign.

But happily, such admonitions are becoming every day of more limited application; and we return with pleasure to the animating idea of that great revolution of which we were noting the introductory signs. It is a revolution in the manner of estimating the souls of the people, and consequently in the judgment of what should be done for their welfare. Through many ages, that immense multitude had been but obscurely presented to view in the character of rational improvable creatures. They were recognized but as one large mass, of equivocal moral substance, but faintly distinguishable into individuals; a breadth of insignificant sameness, undiscernible in marked features and aspects of mental character; existing, and to be left to exist, in their own manner; and that manner hardly worth concern or inquiry. Little consideration could there be of how much spiritual immortal essence might be going to waste, while this multitude was reduced to this kind of collective nothingness on the field of contemplation. But now it is as if a mist were rising and dispersing from that field, and leaving this mighty assemblage of spiritual beings exhibited to view in such a light from heaven as they were never beheld in before, except by the eyes of Apostles, and of a small number that in every age have resembled them.

It is true, this manifestation forms so melancholy a vision, that if we had only to behold

it as a *spectacle*, we might well desire that the misty obscurity might descend upon it again, to shroud it from sight; while we should be left to indulge and elate our imaginations by dwelling on the pomps and splendors of the terrestrial scene,—the mighty empires, the heroes, the victories, the triumphs; the refinements and enjoyments of the most highly cultivated of the race; the brilliant performances of genius, and the astonishing reach of science. So the tempter would have beguiled our Lord into a complacent contemplation of the kingdoms and glories of the world. But he was come to look on a different aspect of it! Nor could he be withdrawn from the gloomy view of its degradation and misery. And a good reason why. For the sole object for which he had appeared in the only world where temptation could even in form approach him, was to begin in operation, and finish in virtue, a design for changing that state of degradation and misery. In the prosecution of such a design, and in the spirit of that divine benevolence in which it sprung, he could endure to fix on the melancholy and odious character of the scene, the contemplation which was vainly attempted to be diverted to any other of its aspects. What, indeed, could sublunary pomps and glories be to him in any case; but emphatically what, when his object was to redeem the people from darkness and destruction?

Those who, actuated by a spirit in some remote resemblance to His, have entered deeply

into the state of the people, such as it is found in our own nation, have often been appalled at the spectacle disclosed to them. They have been astonished to think what *can* have been the direction, while successive ages have passed away, of so many thousands of acute and vigilant mental eyes, that so dreadful a sight should scarcely have been descried. They have been aware that in describing it, as they actually saw it, they would be regarded by some as gloomy fanatics, tinctured with insanity by the influence of some austere creed; and that others, of kinder nature, but whose sensibility has more of self-indulging refinement than tendency to active benevolence, would almost wish that so revolting an exhibition had never been made, though the fact be actually so. There may have been moments, when even they themselves have experienced a temporary recoil of their benevolent zeal, under the impression at once of the immensity of the evil and its grievously offensive quality. At times, the rudeness of the subjects, and perhaps the ungracious reception and thankless requital, of their philanthropic labors, aggravating the general feeling of the miserableness, (so to express it,) of seeing so much misery, have lent seduction to the temptations to ease and self-indulgence. Why should *they*, just they of all men, condemn themselves to dwell so much in the most dreary climate of the moral world, when they could perhaps have taken their almost constant abode in a little elysium of elegant

knowledge, taste, and refined society? Then was the time to revert to the example of him "who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor."

Or, again, their thoughts may not unfrequently be turned on that view of things, which we have described as so habitual, and of such withering effect, with men who speculate on benevolence with but little of its spirit. They may have dwelt too long on the consideration, of how much the higher and more amply furnished powers leave such generous designs to proceed as they can, in the mere strength of private individual exertion. And they may have yielded to gloomy and repressive feelings after the fervor of indignant ones: for indignation, unless animated by a very sanctified principle, is very apt, when it cools, to become despondency. It is as if, (they have said,) armies and giants would stand aloof to amuse themselves, while we are to be committed and abandoned in the ceaseless toil of a conflict, which these armies and giants have no business even to exist as such but for the very purpose of waging. We are, if we will,—and if we will we may let it alone—to try to effect in diminutive pieces, and detached local efforts, a little share of that, to which the greatest human force on earth might be applied to operate on system, and to the widest compass.—So they have said, perhaps, and been tempted to leave their object to its destiny.



But really it is now too late for this resentful and desponding abandonment. They cannot now retire in the tragical dignity of despair. It must be a matter more forlorn that would admit of their saying, as in parody or travesty of Cato, "Witness heaven and earth, we have done our duty, but the stars and fate are against us; and here it becomes us to terminate a strife, which would degenerate into the ridiculous if prosecuted against impossibilities." On the contrary, the zeal which could begin so onerous a work, and prosecute it thus far, could not now remit without betraying its past ardor to the condemnation and ridicule due to a fantastic caprice. Is it for the projectors of a noble edifice for public utility, to abandon the undertaking when it has risen from its foundation to be seen above the ground; or is just come to be level with the surface of the waters, in defiance of which it has been commenced, and the violence of which it was designed to control, or the unfordable depths and streams of which it was to bear people over? Let the promoters of education and christian knowledge among the inferior classes, reflect what has already been accomplished; regarding it, we once again repeat, as quite the incipient stage. It is most truly as yet the day of small things; but let them recount the individuals whom, nevertheless, they have seen rescued from what had all the signs of a destination to the lowest debasement, and utter ruin; some of whom are returning animated thanks, and

will do so in the hour of death, for what these, their best human friends, have been the means of imparting to them. Let them recollect of how many families they have seen the domestic condition pleasingly, and in some instances eminently and delightfully amended. And let them reflect how they have trampled down prejudices, greatly silenced a heathenish clamor, and provoked the imitative and rival efforts of many who, but for them, would have been most cordially willing for all such schemes to lie in abeyance to the end of time. Let them think of all this, and then go on and try, (we speak reverently,) what God and they can do, whether the authorities that govern the nations will or will not lend their powers vigorously in aid; whether, when the infinite importance of the concern is represented to them, they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

But let them never fear but the time will come, when the rulers and the ascendent classes in states will comprehend it to be their best policy to promote all possible improvement of the people. It will be given to them to understand, that the highest glory of those at the head of great communities, must consist in the eminence attained by those communities generally, in whatever it is that constitutes the most valuable and honorable superiority of one man or class over others. They will one day have learnt to esteem it a far nobler form of power to *lead* an immense combination of intelligent minds, than to command and coerce a

great aggregation of brute force. They will come to feel, that it is better for them to have a people who can understand and rationally approve their purposes and measures, than one bent in stupid submission,—or rather one fermenting in ignorant disaffection, continually believing them to be wrong, and without sense enough to appreciate the arguments to prove them right. And a time will come, when it will not be left to the philanthropic speculatists alone, to make the comparative estimate between what has been effected by the enormously expensive apparatus of coercive and penal administration,—the prisons, prosecutions, transportations, and a vast military police,—and what *might* have been effected by one half of that expenditure devoted to popular reformation, to be accomplished by means of schools, and every practicable variety of methods for effecting, that men's understanding and conscience shall stand confronting them in the way, like the angel with the sword, when they are inclined or tempted to go wrong.—All this will come to pass in due time. But meanwhile, let the promoters of a good cause act on the consideration, that no time is *theirs*, but the present.

## SECTION V.

*Moderate computations to be made for the effects of knowledge communicated:—advantages actually gained:—improvement in benevolent institutions:—general considerations.*

WE have not come so near the end of our observations, without having been many times reminded, that there will be persons ready to impute sanguine extravagance to our expectations of the results, to follow from such means and exertions for improving the popular education as are already in progress; we mean especially the schools which benevolence is multiplying over the land, the kind and measure of subsequent reading for which it is hoped not a few of their pupils will have acquired a taste, and the habit established of attendance on public christian instruction. And what is it, then, how much is it, we ask, that the advocates of the system, profess to anticipate? Are they heard maintaining that the communication of knowledge, or true notions of things, to youthful minds, will infallibly ensure their virtue and happiness? They are not quite so new to the world, to experimental labors in the business of tuition, or to self-observation. They have constantly within their view a mournful illustration of the quality of human nature, in the circumstance, of the great difference of assurance

with which the effects may be predicted of ignorance on the one hand, and knowledge on the other. There is very nearly an absolute certainty of success in the method for making clowns, sots, vagabonds, and ruffians. You may safely leave it to themselves to carry on the process for becoming complete. Let human creatures grow up without discipline, destitute therefore of salutary information, sound judgment, or any conscience but what will shape itself to whatever they like, and serve in the manner of some vile friar pander in the old plays,—and no one thinks of taking any credit for foresight in saying they will be a noxious burden on the earth; except indeed in those tracts of it where they seem to have their fair business, in being matched against the wolves and bears of the wilderness. When they infest what should be a civilized and christianized part of the world, the philanthropist is sometimes put in doubt whether to repress, or indulge, the sentiment which tempts him to complacency in the operations of an epidemic which is thinning their numbers.

The consequences of ignorance are certain, unless almost a miracle interpose; but unhappily those of knowledge are of diffident and very restricted calculation. It is the testimony of all ages that men may see and even approve the better, and yet follow the worse. It is the hapless predicament of our nature, that the noblest of its powers, the understanding, has but imperfectly and precariously that com-

manding hold on the others, which is essential to the good order of the soul; as in a machine where the secondary wheels should be liable to be thrown by a slight movement out of the catch and grapple of the master one. Nay, worse than so, these moral powers, when detached from the control of the understanding, may have a powerful action of their own, from the impulse of another principle: indeed it is this impulse that causes the detachment from that control. It is really frightful to look at the evidence, from facts, that these active powers *may* grow strong in the depravity which will set the judgment at defiance, during the very time that the judgment is training, and not without success, to an ability to dictate to them what is right. We cannot pay any serious attention to the fancy of those, who will have it that when the passions and will go wrong, it *must* be because the understanding has not a just apprehension. This gross assumption, in what is purely a question of fact, is in flat contradiction to an infinity of evidence, of men deliberately and distinctly avowing their conviction of the evil quality, and fatal consequences, of courses which they are soon afterwards seen pursuing, and without the smallest pretence of a change of opinion; of men still avowing the same conviction, and sometimes in strong terms of self-reproach, in the checks and pauses of their career; and of men in the near prospect of death and judgment expressing, in bitter regret, the acknowl-

edgment that they had persisted in acting wrong while they knew better. And this assumption so wilfully made against such evidence, is to be maintained for no better reason, that appears, than that human nature cannot, must not, shall not, be so absurd and depraved as to be capable of such madness. As if human nature were taking the smallest trouble to assume before them any equivocal appearance to cozen them into a favorable opinion; as if it suspended its determined propensities in complaisance to their denying that it has them. It has, and keeps, and shews its character, without the leave of those who would resolve its moral turpitude into error in its understanding. But for understanding—it should be time to take care of their own, when they find themselves asserting, in other words, that there is actually as much virtue in the world as there is knowledge of its principles. We should rather have surmised that, deplorably deficient as that knowledge is, the reduction of it all to practice would make a glorious change in England and Europe.

The persons, therefore, whose zeal is combined with knowledge in the prosecution of plans for the extension of education, proceed on a calculation of an effect more limited, in apparent proportion to the means, and less positively, (even in that more limited measure,) to be reckoned on in a given single instance, than they would have been justified in anticipating in many other departments of operation. They

would, for example, predict with more confidence the results of an undertaking to cultivate any tract of waste land, or to reclaim a bog, or to render mechanical forces and contrivance available in a difficult untried mode of application; or, in many cases, the successful results of the application of the healing art to diseased body. They still remember what moral nature they are calculating on, and calculating *for good*. And in their more gloomy moments they perhaps fall into a comparison of *their* calculation on it for good, with that which an enemy of mankind might please himself in making on it for evil; both of them having respect to the same particular human beings, and both keeping in view this fact of the very imperfect command of the judgment over the active powers of the mind. In some such moments they would be glad of an exchange between their respective degrees of probability. That is to say, let a man, if such there be, who could be pleased with the depravity and misery of the race, a sagacious judge, too, of their moral constitution, and a veteran observer of their conduct,—let him look over a hundred children in one of the benevolent schools, and indulge himself in prognosticating, on the strength of the fact to which we have adverted, the proportion, in numbers and degree, in which these children will, in subsequent life, exemplify the *failure* of what is done for their wisdom and welfare,—there may be times, we say, when the friends of these institutions



would be glad to transfer the portion in which, and the probability with which, he so prognosticates evil from the nature of the beings, to their own hopes of the good to be effected by discipline. In other words, there are times when they would say, "evil be thou my good," in the sense of wishing that the respective proportions of power, with which the agencies of good and evil are affecting the subjects in question, could be exchanged between them.

But we shall know where to stop in the course of observations of this darkening color; and we shall take off the point of the derider's taunt, just forthcoming, that we are here unsaying, in effect, all that we have been so laboriously urging about the value and absolute necessity of knowledge to the people. It was proper to shew, that the prosecutors of these designs are not suffering themselves to be beguiled out of a perception of what there is in the nature of their subjects of a tendency to frustrate them, and of certain power to reduce their efficacy to a very partial measure of the effect desired. It was to be shewn that they are not unknowing enthusiasts; but then, in keeping clear of the vain extravagancies of hope, they are not to surrender their confidence that something great and important can be done: it should be possible for a man to be sober, short of being dead. They are not to gravitate down into a state of feeling as if the understanding had been proved to have no sway upon the moral powers; as if, therefore,

any presumption upon the relation between means and ends must in this great department of action be illusory. It might not indeed be amiss for them to be *told* that the case is so, by those who would desire, from whatever motive, to repress their efforts and defeat their designs; as so downright a blow at their favorite object would but serve to provoke them, to a determined exercise of thought to ascertain more definitely what there really is for them to form their schemes and calculations upon, and therefore to verify to themselves the reasons they have for persisting, in confidence that the labor will not be lost. And the instant they apply themselves, in this severe sobriety, to the estimates, they have the fact conspicuous before them, that there is at any rate such an efficacy in cultivation, that it is quite certain a well cultivated people *cannot* remain on the same degraded moral level as a neglected ignorant one,—or any where near it. None of those even that value such designs the least, ever pretend to foresee, after they shall have taken effect, an undiminished prevalence of rudeness and brutality of manners, of delight in spectacles and amusements of cruelty, of noisy revelry, of sottish intemperance, or of disregard of character. It is not pretended to be foreseen that the poorer classes will then continue to display so much of that heedless and almost desperate improvidence, respecting their temporal means and prospects, which has aggravated the calamities of the present times.

It is not predicted that an universal school discipline will bring up several millions to the neglect, and many of them in the impudent contempt, of attendance on the ministrations of religion. The result will at all hazards, by every one's acknowledgment, be *the contrary of all this*.

But more specifically:—The promoters of the plans of popular education see a most important advantage gained in the very outset, and as perhaps the smallest matter in the account of emolument, in the obvious fact, that in their schools a very large portion of time is employed well, that otherwise would infallibly be employed ill. Let any one introduce himself into one of these places of assemblage, where there has been time to mature the arrangements into the most efficient system. He should not enter as an important personage, in patronizing and judicial state, to demand the respectful looks of the whole tribe from their attention to their printed rudiments and their slates; but glide in as a quiet observer, just to survey at his leisure the character and operations of the scene. Undoubtedly he will descry here and there the signs of inattention, weariness, or vacancy, not to say of perverseness. Even these individuals, however, are out of the way of practical harm; and at the same time he will see a multitude of youthful spirits acknowledging the duty of directing their best attention to something altogether foreign to their wild amusements; of making a protracted effort in

one mode or another of the strange business of *thinking*. He will perceive in many the unequivocal indications of a real grave and earnest effort made to acquire, with the aid of visible signs and implements, a command of what is invisible and immaterial. They are thus treading in the precincts of an intellectual economy; the economy of thought and truth, in which they are to live for ever; and never, to eternity, will they have to regret *this* period and part of their employments. He will be delighted to think how many disciplined actions of the mind, how many just ideas, distinctly admitted, that were strangers at the beginning of the day's exercise, (and among these ideas some to remind them of God and their highest interest,)—there will have been by the time the busy and well ordered company breaks up in the evening, and leaves silence within these walls. He will not indeed grow romantic in hope; he knows too much of the nature to which these beings belong; knows therefore that the desired results of this discipline will but partially follow; but still rejoices to think that partial result, which will most certainly follow, will be worth incomparably more than all it will have cost.

Now let him, when he has contemplated this scene, consider how the greatest part of this numerous company *would* have been employed during the same hours, (whether of the sabbath or other days,) but for such a provision of means for their instruction. And, for the

contrast, he has only to leave the school, and walk a mile round the neighborhood, in which it will be very wonderful, (we may say this of most parts of England,) if he shall not, in a populous district and on a fine day, meet with a great number of wretched disgusting imps, straggling or in knots, in the activity of mischief and nuisance, or at least the full cry of vile and profane language; with here and there, as a lord among them, an elder larger one growing fast into an insolent blackguard. He may make the comparison, quite sure that such as they are, and so employed, would many now under the salutary discipline of yonder school have been, but for its institution. But the two classes, so beheld in contrast,—might they not seem to belong to two different nations? Do they not seem growing into two extremely different orders of character? Do they not even seem preparing for different worlds in the final distribution?

The friends of these designs for a general and highly improved education, may proceed further in this course of verifying to themselves the grounds of their assurance of happy results. A number of ideas decidedly the most important that were ever formed in human thought, or imparted from the Supreme Mind, will be so taught in these institutions, that it is absolutely certain they will be fixed irrevocably and for ever in the minds of many of the pupils. It will be as impossible to erase these ideas from their memories as to extinguish the stars.

And in the case of many, perhaps the majority, of these youthful beings, advancing into the temptations of life, these grand ideas, thus fixed deep in their souls, will distinctly present themselves to judgment and conscience an incalculable number of times. What a number, if *the* sum of all these reminiscences of these ideas, in all the minds now assembled in a numerous school, could be conjectured! But if one in a hundred of these recollections, if one in a thousand, shall have the efficacy that it ought to have, who can compute the amount of the good resulting from the tuition which shall have so enforced and fixed these ideas that they shall infallibly be thus recollected? And it is altogether out of reason to hope that the desired efficacy will, as often as once in a thousand times, attend the luminous rising again of a solemn idea to the view of the mind? Is still less than *this* to be hoped for our unhappy nature, and that too while a beneficent God has the superintendence of it?

The institutions themselves will gradually improve in both the manner and the compass of their discipline. They will acquire a more vigorous mechanism, (if we may so name it,) and a more decidedly intellectual character. In this latter respect, it is but comparatively of late years that schools for the inferior classes have ventured any thing beyond the humblest pretensions. Mental cultivation—intellectual and moral discipline—almost the word Education itself—were terms of denomination which

they were reverently cautious of taking in vain. They would have been regarded as of too ambitious an import, as seeming to betray somewhat of the impertinence of a *disposition*, (for the idea of the *practicability* of any such invasion would have been scorned,) to encroach on a ground exclusively appropriate to the superior orders. Schools for the poor were to be as little as possible scholastic. They were to have every possible assimilation to the workshop, excepting perhaps in one particular,—that of working hard: for the scholars were literally to throw time away rather than be occupied with any thing beyond the merest rudiments. Their advocates and petitioners for aid were to avow and plead how little it was that they pretended or presumed to teach. The argument in their behalf was either to begin or end with saying, that they *only* taught reading and writing; or if it could not be denied that there was to be some meddling with the first rules of arithmetic,—we may safely appeal to some of these pleaders whether they did not, twenty or thirty years since, bring out this addition with the management and hesitation of a confession and apology. It is a prominent characteristic of that happy revolution we have spoken of as in commencement, that this aristocratic notion of education is breaking up. The theory of the subject is loosening into enlargement; and no longer presumes, or will not much longer presume, to impose a niggardly restriction on the extent of what shall be

sought to be accomplished in schools for the inferiors of the community.

As these institutions go on, augmenting in number and improving in organization, their pupils will bring their quality and efficacy to the proof, as they grow to maturity, and go forth to act their part in society. And there can be no doubt, that while too many of them may probably be mournful examples of the evil genius of the corrupt nature, and the infection of a bad world, prevailing against the better influences of instruction, and may descend toward the old wretched condition of the people, a very considerable proportion will take and permanently maintain a far higher ground. They will have become imbued with an element, which will have put them in strong repulsion to that coarse vulgar that will be sure to continue in existence, in this country, long enough to be a trial of the moral taste of this better cultivated race. It will be seen that they cannot associate with it by choice, and in the spirit of companionship. And while *they* are thus withheld on their part, from approximating, it may be hoped that the repelling principle will be converted into attraction in the case of a certain less ill affected portion of that vulgar. Its entire numbers cannot remain careless, contemptuous, or merely and malignantly envious, at sight of the advantages obtained, through the sole medium of personal improvement, by those who had otherwise been exactly on the same level as themselves.



The effect on pride, in some, and on better propensities, it may be hoped, in others, will be to excite them to make their way upward to a community which, they will clearly see, could commit no greater folly than to come downward to them. And we will presume a friendly disposition in most of those who shall have been raised to this higher ground, to meet such aspirers and help them to ascend.

And while they will thus draw upward the less immovable and hopeless part of the mass below them, they will themselves on the other hand be placed, by the respectability of their understanding and manners, within the influence of the higher cultivation of the classes above them; a great advantage, as we have taken occasion to notice in a former stage of these observations.—We must not, however, attribute high cultivation, as quite a thing of course in the classes above them, meaning by this designation the superiority in property and what is called condition in life. For, in truth, too many of these more privileged persons may be observed to betray a disgraceful deficiency of what is indispensable in the mind in order to dignify their station. But here another important advantage is suggested as likely to accrue from the better education of the common people, namely, that their rising attainments would compel not a few of their superiors to betake themselves to mental improvement, in order to keep their desired distance. Would it not be a most excellent thing that they

should find themselves thus incommodiously pressed upon by a new and strange circumstance in the creation, and forced to preserve that ascendancy for which wealth and station would formerly suffice, at the cost, now, of a good deal more reading, thinking; and general self-discipline? Would it be a worthy sacrifice, that to spare some substantial agriculturists, idle gentlemen, and sporting or promenading ecclesiastics, such an afflictive necessity, the actual tillers of the ground, and the workers in manufacture and mechanics, should continue to be kept in stupid ignorance?

It is very possible this may excite a smile, as the threatening of a necessity or a danger to these privileged persons, which it is thought they may be comfortably assured is very remote. This danger,—that a good many of them, or rather of those who are coming in the course of nature to succeed them in the same rank, will find that its relative consequence cannot be sustained but at a very considerably higher pitch of mental qualification,—is threatened upon no stronger presages than the following:—Allow us first to take it for granted, that no very long course of years will have passed before the case comes to be, that a large proportion of the children of the lower classes are trained through a laborious discipline, during a series of years, in such schools as every thing possible is done to render efficient. Then, if we include in one computation all the time they will have spent in real mental

exercise and acquirement there, and all those pieces and intervals of time which we may reasonably hope that many of them will employ to the same purpose in the subsequent years, a good proportion of them will have employed, by the time they reach middle age, many thousands of hours more than people in their condition have heretofore done, in a way the most directly tending to the improvement of their minds. And how must we be estimating the natural capacities of these inferior classes, or the perceptions of the higher, not to foresee as a consequence, that these latter will find their relative situation greatly altered, with respect to the measure of knowledge and mental power requisite as one most essential constituent of their superiority, in order to command the unfeigned deference of their inferiors?

Our strenuous promoters of the schemes for cultivating the minds of all the people, are not afraid of professing to foresee, that when schools, of that completely disciplinarian organization which they will gradually attain, shall have become general, and shall be vigorously seconded by all those auxiliary expedients for popular instruction which are also in progress; a very pleasing modification will become apparent in the character, the moral color, if we might so express it, of the people's ordinary employment. The young persons so instructed, being appointed, for the most part, to the same occupations to which they would have been destined had they grown up in utter igno-

rance and vulgarity, are expected to give striking evidence that the meanness, the debasement almost, which had characterized many of those occupations, in the view of the more refined classes, was in truth the debasement of *the* men rather than of the callings; which, it is anticipated, will change to an appearance of much more respectability, as associated with the sense, decorum, and self-respect of the performers, than they had borne when blended and polluted with all the low habits, manners, and language, of ignorance and vulgar grossness. And then for the degree of excellence in the performance,—who will be the persons most likely to excel, in the many branches of workmanship and business which admit of being better done in proportion to the degree of intelligence directed upon them? And again, who will be most in requisition for those offices of management and superintendence, where something must be confided to judgment and discretion, and where the value is felt, (often grievously felt from the want,) of some power of combination and foresight?

Such as these are among the subordinate benefits reasonably, we might say infallibly, calculated upon. Our philanthropists are confident in foreseeing also, that very many of these better disciplined young persons will be valuable co-operators against that ignorance from which themselves have been so happily saved; will exert an influence, by their example and the steady avowal of their opinions,

against the vice and folly in their vicinity; and will be useful advisers of their neighbors in their perplexities, and sometimes moderators in their discords. It is predicted, with a confidence so much resting on general grounds of probability, as hardly to need the instances already afforded in various parts of the country to confirm it; that here and there one of the well instructed humbler class will become an able and useful public teacher of the most important truth. It is, in short, anticipated with delightful assurance, that great numbers of those who will go forth from under the friendly guardianship which is now preparing to take the charge of their youthful minds, will be examples, through life and at its conclusion, of the power and felicity of religion.

Here we can suppose it not improbable that some one may, in pointed terms, put the question—Do you then, at last, mean to affirm that you can, by the course of discipline spoken of, absolutely secure that effectual operation and ascendancy of religion in the mind, which shall place it in the right condition toward God, and in a state of fitness for passing, without fear or danger, into the scenes of its future endless existence?

Certainly we should think, there might have been many expressions and sentiments in the preceding train of observations, of a nature to preclude any such question; but let it be asked, since there can be no difficulty to reply. We do *not* affirm that any form of discipline, the

wisest and best in the power of the wisest and best men to apply, is competent of itself thus to subject the mind to the power of religion. On the contrary, we believe that grand effect can be accomplished only by a special influence of the Divine Being, operating by the means of such a discipline, or, if he pleases, without it. But next we have to say, that it is perfectly certain, notwithstanding, that the application of these human means will, in a multitude of instances, be efficacious to that sublime effect.

This certainty arises from a few very plain general considerations. The first is, that the whole system of means appointed by the Almighty to be employed as a human process for presenting religion solemnly in view before men's minds, and enforcing it upon them, is an appointment *expressly intended* for working that great effect which secures their endless felicity, though to what extent in point of number, is altogether unknown to the subordinate agents. With some awful exceptions of obdurate malignant infidelity, (as in the case of the Jews in the time of our Lord,) in which it was plainly signified that the manifestation and enforcement of divine truth would not, and should not, have this blessed effect,—with these exceptions, the whole order of expedients in this great course of operation is most formally represented, by him that has commanded their employment, as to be employed in a confident expectation of attaining, in a proportion to be determined by himself, the great end to which

these expedients are avowedly directed. The appointment is most evidently not one of mere exercise for the faculties and submissive obedience of those who are summoned to be active in its execution.

Accordingly, there are in the divine revelation very many explicit and animating assurances, that their exertion shall certainly be in a measure successful, in the highest sense of the word. And if these assurances are made in favor of the exertions for inculcating religion, generally, that is on men of all conditions and ages, they may be assumed with a still stronger confidence in favor of those for impressing it on young minds, before they can be preoccupied and hardened by the depravities of the world. But besides, there are some of these expressions of promised success given in special favor of this one part of the application of the great general process; affording rays of hope which have in ten thousand instances animated the diligence of pious parents, and the other benevolent instructors of children.

There is also palpable and striking matter of fact, to confirm the certainty, that an education in which religious instruction shall be mingled in the mental discipline, will be rendered, in many instances, efficacious to the formation of a religious character. This obvious fact is, that a much greater proportion of the persons so educated do actually become the subjects of religion, than of a similar number of those brought up in ignorance and profligacy. Take

collectively any number of families in which such an education prevails, and the same number in which it does not, and follow the young persons respectively into subsequent life. But any one who hears the suggestion, feels there is no need to wait the lapse of time and follow their actual course. As instructed by what he has already seen in society, he can go forward with them prophetically, with an absolute certainty that a much greater proportion of the one tribe, than of the other, will become persons not only of moral respectability, but of decided religion. Here then is practical evidence, that while discipline must disclaim any absolute power to produce this effect, there is, nevertheless, such a constitution of things that it infallibly will, as an instrumental cause, in many instances produce it.

The state of the matter, then, is very simple. The Supreme Cause of men's being "made wise to salvation," in appointing a system of means, to be put by human activity in operation toward this effect, has connected certainly and inseparably with that system, some portion of the accomplishment of this sovereign good which would not take place in the absence of such application of means:—only he has placed this certainty in the system of operation *as taken generally and comprehensively*; leaving, as to human foresight, an *uncertainty* with respect to the particular instances in which the desired success shall be attained. His subordinate agents are to proceed on this positive assurance



that the success *shall be somewhere*, though they cannot know that it will be in this one case, or in the other. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this, or that." If they rate the value of their agency so high, as to hold it incompatible with their dignity that any part of their labors should be performed under the condition of possibly being unsuccessful, they may be assured that such is not exactly the estimate in which they stand in the judgment of Him to whom they look for the acceptance of their services, and for the reward.

But it may be added, that the great majority of those who are intent on the schemes for enlightening and reforming mankind, are entertaining a confident hope of the approach of a period when the success will be far greater in proportion to the measure of exertion, in every department of the system of instrumentality for that grand object. We cherish this confidence, not on the strength of any pretension to be able to resolve prophetic emblems and numbers into precise dates and events of the present and approaching times. We rest it on a much more general mode of combining the very extraordinary indications of the period we live in, with the substantial purport of the divine predictions. There unquestionably gleams forth, through the plainer lines and through the mystical imagery of prophecy, the vision of a better age, in which the application of the

truths of religion to men's minds will be irresistible. And what should more naturally be interpreted as one of the dawning signs of its approach, than a sudden wide movement at once to clear their intellects and bring the heavenly light to shine close upon them; accompanied by a prodigious breaking up in the old system of the world, which hardly recognized in the inferior millions the very existence of souls to need such an illumination?

The laborers in the institutions for instructing the young descendants of those millions, may often regret to perceive how little the process is as yet informed with the energy which is thus to pervade the world. But let them regard as one great undivided economy and train of operation, these initiatory efforts and all that is to follow, till that time "when all shall know the Lord;" and take by anticipation, as in fraternity with the happier future laborers, their just share of that ultimate triumph. Those active spirits, in the happier stages, will look back with this sentiment of kindred and complacency to those who sustained the earlier toils of the good cause, and did not suffer their zeal to languish under the comparative smallness of their success.

## SECTION VI.

*Concluding remarks.*

WE shall conclude with a few sentences in the way of reply to another question, which we can surmise there may be persons ready to ask, after this long iteration of the assertion of the necessity of knowledge to the common people. The question would be to this effect: What do you, all this while, mean to assign as the *measure* of knowledge proper for the people to be put in possession of?—for you do not specify the kinds, nor limit the extent: you talk in vague general terms of mental improvement; you leave the whole matter indefinite; and for all that appears, the people are never to know when they know enough.

We answer, that we *do* leave the extent undefined, and should request to be informed where, and why, the line of circumscription and exclusion should be drawn.

We could wish, in the first place, to be certified, whether it is to be considered as yet at all a settled point, in what the value and importance of the human nature does really consist. It is indeed quite an uniformly assumed thing in the language of both divines and philosophers, that the worth, the dignity, the importance, of man, are in his rational immortal

nature; and that therefore the best condition of *that* is his true felicity and glory, and the object chiefly to be aimed at in all that is done by him, and for him, on earth. But whether this should be regarded as any thing more than the elated faith of ascetics, or a fine dogma of academic speculation? For we often see, and it is very striking to see, how principles which pass for infallible truth within the province of thinking and doctrine, and are directly applicable, with most emphatic importance, to great practical interests, may be disowned and repelled, as perfectly foreign, intrusive, and visionary, when they come demanding to have their appropriate place and power in the actual state of things. But is it really admitted, as the great practical principle, that the mind, the intelligent imperishable existence, is the supremely valuable thing in man? It is then admitted, inevitably, that the discipline, the correction, the improvement, the maturation, of this spiritual being, to the highest attainable degree, is the great object to be desired by men, for themselves, and one another. That is to say, that knowledge, cultivation, salutary exercise, wisdom, all that can conduce to the perfection of the mind, form the state in which it is due to man's nature that he should be endeavored to be placed. But then, this is due to his nature by an absolutely *general* law. He cannot be so circumstanced in the order of society that this shall *not* be due to it. No situation in which the arrangements of the world, or

say of Providence, may place him, can constitute him a specific kind of creature, to which is no longer fit and necessary that which is necessary to the well-being of man considered generally, as a spiritual immortal nature. The essential law of this nature cannot be abrogated by men's being placed in humble and narrow circumstances, in which a very large portion of their time and exertions are required for mere subsistence. This accident of a confined situation is no more a reason why their minds should not require the best possible cultivation, than would be the circumstance that the body in which a man's mind is lodged, happens to be of smaller dimensions than those of other men.

That under the disadvantages of this humble situation they *cannot* acquire all the mental improvement, desirable for the perfection of their intelligent nature,—that the situation renders it impracticable,—is quite another matter. So far as this inhibition is real and absolute, it must be submitted to as one of the infelicities of their lot. What we are insisting on is, that by the law of their nature there is to them the same general necessity as to any other human beings, of that which is essential to the well-being of the mind; and that therefore they should be advanced in this improvement *as far as they can*. A greater degree of this advancement will conduce more to their welfare than a less.

This might be confirmed by easy and obvious illustration. A poor man, cultivated in a

small degree, has acquired a few just ideas of an important subject, which lies out of the scope of his daily employments for subsistence. Be that subject what it may, if those ideas are of any use to him, by what principle would one idea more, or two, or twenty, be of *no* use to him? Of no use, when all the thinking world knows, that every additional clear idea of a subject is valuable by a ratio of progress much greater than that of the mere numerical increase, and that by a large addition of ideas a man trebles the value of those with which he began. He has read a small meagre tract on the subject, or perhaps only an article in a magazine, or an essay in the literary column of a provincial newspaper. Where would be the harm, on supposition he can fairly afford the time, in consequence of husbanding it for this very purpose, of his reading a well written concise book, which would give him a clear comprehensive view of the subject?

But perhaps another branch of the tree of knowledge bends its fruit temptingly to his hand. And if he should indulge, and gain a tolerably clear notion of one more interesting subject, (still punctually regardful of the duties of his ordinary vocation,) where, we say again, is the harm? Converse with him; observe his conduct; compare him with a wretched clown in a neighboring dwelling; and say that he is the worse for having thus much of the provision for a mental subsistence. But if thus much has contributed greatly to his advantage,

why should he be interdicted still further attainments? Are you alarmed for him, if he will needs go the length of acquiring some knowledge of geography, the solar system, and the history of his own country and of the ancient world? Let him proceed; supply him gratuitously with some of the best books on these subjects; and if you shall converse with him again, after another year or two of his progress, and compare him once more with the ignorant, stunted, cankered beings in his vicinity, you will see whether there be any thing essentially at variance, between his narrow circumstances in life and his mental enlargement.

You are willing, perhaps, that he *should* acquire some knowledge of ancient times, and can trust him with Goldsmith's Histories of Greece and Rome. But if he should then by some means find his way into such a work as that of Rollin, or betray that he covets an acquaintance with those of Gillies, or even Mitford,—it is all over with him for being an useful member of society in his humble situation. You would consent to his reading a slender abridgment of voyages and travels; but what *is* to become of him if nothing less will content him than the whole length story of Captain

[ \* These denominations of knowledge, so strange as they will to some persons appear, in such a connexion, we have ventured to write from observing, that they stand in the schemes of elementary instruction in the missionary schools for the children of the natives of Bengal. But of course we are to acknowledge, that the vigorous high-toned spirits of those Asiatic idolaters, are adapted to receive a much superior style of cultivation to any of which the feeble progeny of England can be supposed to be capable.

Cook? He will direct, it is to be hoped, some of his best attention to the supreme subject of religion. And you would quite approve of his perusing some useful tracts, some manuals of piety, some commentary on a catechism, some volume of serious plain discourses; but he is absolutely undone if his ambition should rise at length to Stillingfleet, or Howe, or Jeremy Taylor. And yet all this while we can believe that he acquits himself with exemplary regularity and industry in his allotted labors; and that even in this very capacity he is preferred by the men of business to the illiterate tools in his neighborhood; nay, most likely preferred, in the more technical sense of the word, to the honorable, but often sufficiently vexatious office, of directing and superintending the operations of those tools.

And where, now, is the evil he is incurring or causing, during this progress of violating, step after step, the circumscription by which the aristocratic compasses were again and again, with reluctant extension to successive greater distances, defining the scope of the knowledge proper for a man of his condition? It is a bad thing, is it, that he has a great variety of ideas to relieve the tedium incident to the sameness of his course of life; that, with many things which had else been bare unmeaning facts and objects, he has many interesting associations, like woodbines and roses wreathing round the stumps of trees; that the world is a translated and intelligible



volume before his eyes; that he has a power of applying himself to *think* of what becomes at any time necessary for him to understand. Is it a judgment upon him for his temerity, that he has so much to impart to his children as they are growing up, and that if some of them are already come to maturity, they know not where to find a man to respect more than their father? Or if he takes a part in the converse and devotional exercises of religious society, is no one there the better for the clearness and plenitude of his thoughts and the propriety of his expression?—But there would be no end of the preposterous suppositions fairly attachable to the notion, that the mental improvement of the common people has some proper limit of arbitrary prescription; on the ground simply of their *being* the common people, and quite distinct from the restriction which their circumstances may invincibly impose on their ability.

— Taken in this latter view, we acknowledge that their condition would be a subject for most melancholy contemplation, if we did not hope for better times. The benevolent reflector when sometimes led to survey in thought the endless myriads of beings with minds within the circuit of a country like this, will have a momentary vision of them as they would be if all improved to the highest mental condition to which it is *naturally possible* for them to be exalted; a magnificent spectacle but it instantly fades and vanishes. And the sense is so powerfully upon him of the un-

changeable economy of the world, which even if the fairest fondest visions of the millennium itself were realized, would still render such a thing *actually* impossible, that he hardly regrets the bright scene was but a beautiful cloud, and melts away. His imagination then descends to view this immense tribe of rational beings in another, and comparatively moderate state of the improvement of their faculties, a state not one third part so lofty as that in which he had beheld all the individuals improved to the highest degree of which each is naturally capable; and he thinks, that the condition of man's abode on earth *might* admit of their being raised to *this* elevation. But he soon sees, that till a mighty change shall take place in the system according to which the nations are managing their affairs, this too is impossible; and with regret he sees even this inferior ideal spectacle pass away, to rest on an age in distant prospect. At last he takes his imaginary stand on what he feels to be a very low level of the supposed improvement of the general popular mind; and he says, Thus much, at the least, should be a possibility allowed by the circumstances of the people under *any* tolerable order of the disposition of national interests;—and then he turns to look down upon an actual condition in which care, and toil, and distress, render it utterly impossible for a great proportion of the people to reach, or even approach, this his last and lowest conception of what the state of their minds ought to be.

In spite of all the optimists, it is a grievous reflection, after the race has had so many thousands of years on earth to improve its condition, that all the experience, the philosophy, the science, the art, the power acquired by mind over matter,—that all the contributions of all departed and all present spirits and bodies, yes, and all religion too, should have come but to this;—to this, that in what is esteemed the most favored and improved nation of all terrestrial space and time, a vast proportion of the people are absolutely found in a condition which confines them, with all the rigor of necessity, to the veriest childhood of intelligent existence, without its innocence.

But at the very same time, and while compassion is rising at such a view, there comes in on the other hand the reflection, that even in the actual state of things, there are a considerable number of the people who *might* acquire a valuable share of improvement which they do not. Great numbers of them, grown up, waste by choice, and multitudes of children waste through utter neglect, a large quantity of precious time, which their narrow circumstances still leave free from the iron dominion of necessity. And they will waste it, it is certain that they will, till education shall have become general, and much more vigorous in discipline. If through a miracle there were to come down on this country, with a sudden delightful affluence of temporal amelioration, resembling the vernal transformation from the dreariness of winter, an universal prosperity,

so that all should be placed in ease and plenty, it would require another miracle to prevent this benignity of heaven from turning to a dreadful mischief. What would the great tribe of the uneducated people do with the half of their time, which we may suppose that such a state would give to their voluntary disposal? Every one can answer infallibly, that the far greater number of them would consume it in idleness, vanity, or abomination. Educate them, then, educate them;—or, in all circumstances and events, calamitous or prosperous, they are still a race made in vain!

In quitting the subject, we wish to express, in strong terms, the applause and felicitations due to those excellent individuals, found here and there, who in very humble circumstances, and perhaps with very little advantage of education in their youth, have been excited to a strenuous continued exertion for the improvement of their minds; by which they have made, (the unfavorable situation considered,) admirable attainments, which are now passing with inestimable worth into the instruction of their families, and a variety of usefulness within their sphere. They have nobly struggled with their threatened destiny, and have overcome it. When they think, with regret, how confined, after all, is their portion of knowledge, as compared with the rich possessions of those, who have had from their infancy all facilities and the amplest time for its acquirement, let them be consoled by reflecting, that the value of mental progress is not to be meas-

ured solely by the quantity of knowledge possessed, but partly, and indeed still more, by the corrective invigorating effect produced on the mental powers by the resolute exertions made in attaining it. And therefore, since, under their great disadvantages, it has required a much greater degree of this resolute exertion in them to force their way victoriously out of ignorance, than it has required in those who have had every thing in their favor, to make a long free career over the field of knowledge, they may be assured they have obtained a greater benefit in *proportion* to the measure of what they have attained to know. This persistence of a determined will to do what has been so difficult to be done, has infused a peculiar energy into the exercise of their powers; a valuable point of compensation, to be set against the circumstance, that they have not equally with the ampler possessors of knowledge, the advantage of illustrating and perfecting one principle of it by the accession of many others. Let them persevere in this worthy self-discipline, appropriate to the introduction of an endless mental life. Let them go on from strength to strength;—but solemnly taking care, that all their improvements may tend to such a result, that at length the rigor of their lot and the confinement of mortality itself bursting at once from around them, may give them to those intellectual revelations, that everlasting sun-light of the soul, in which the truly wise will expand all their faculties in a happier economy.

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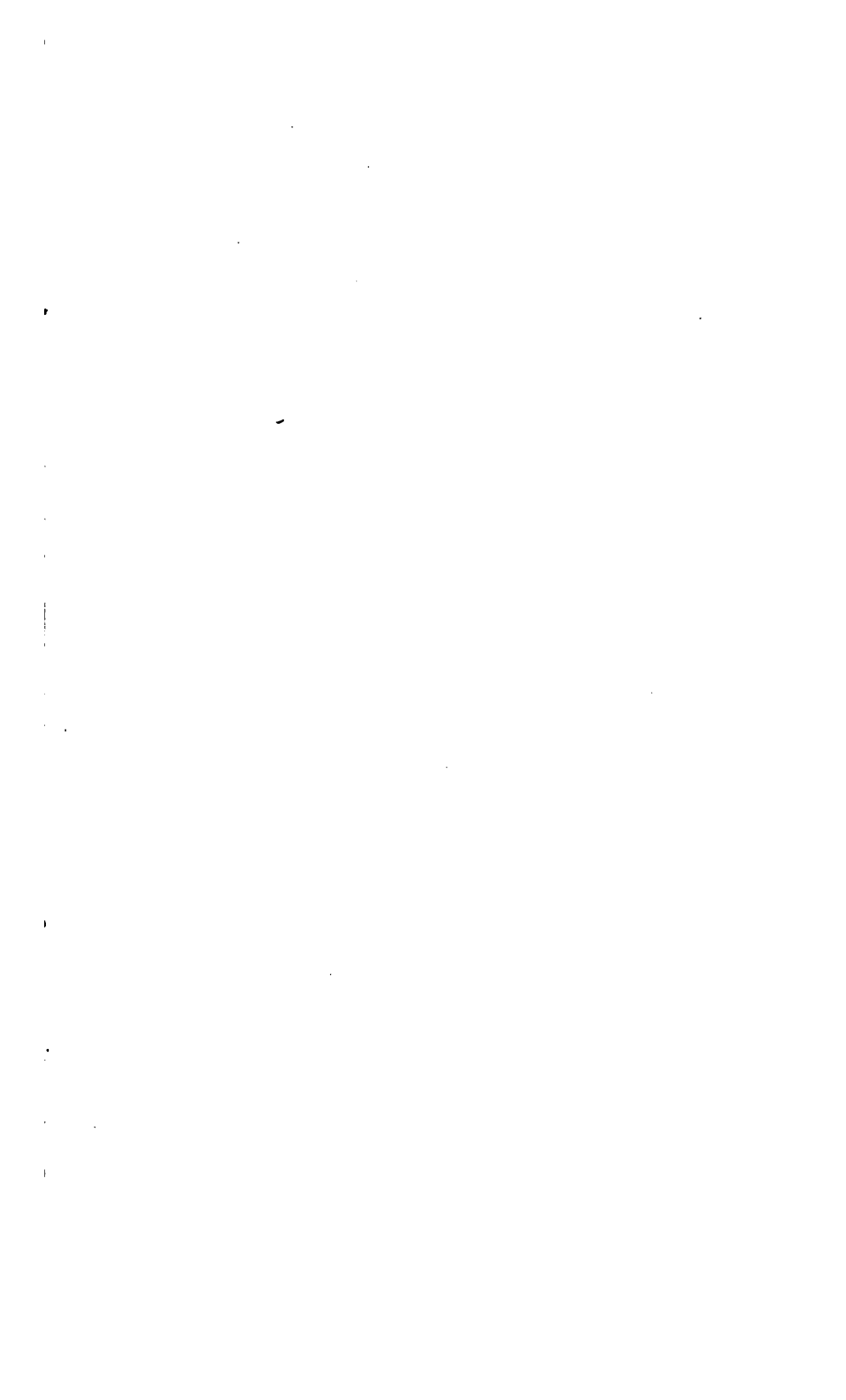
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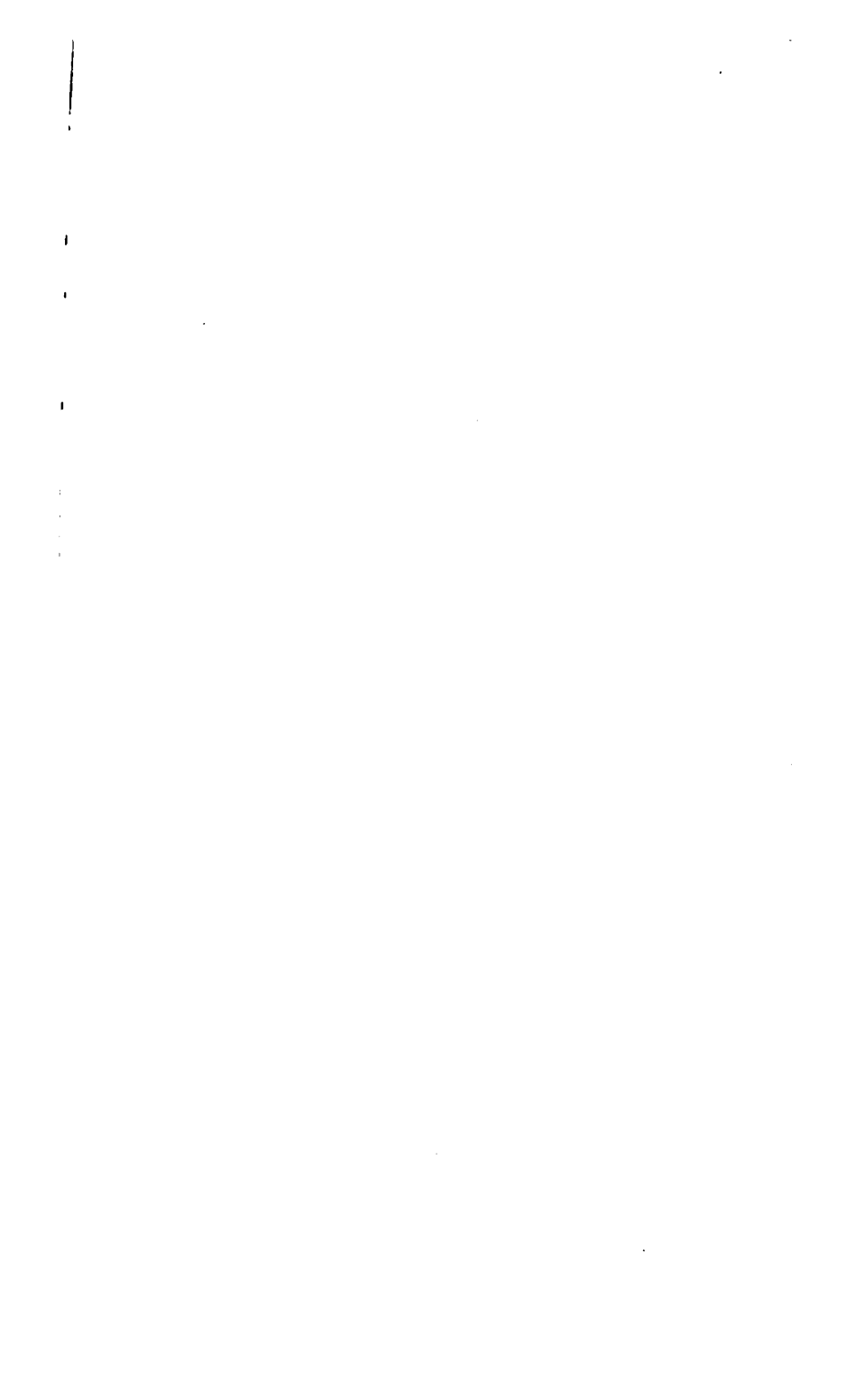
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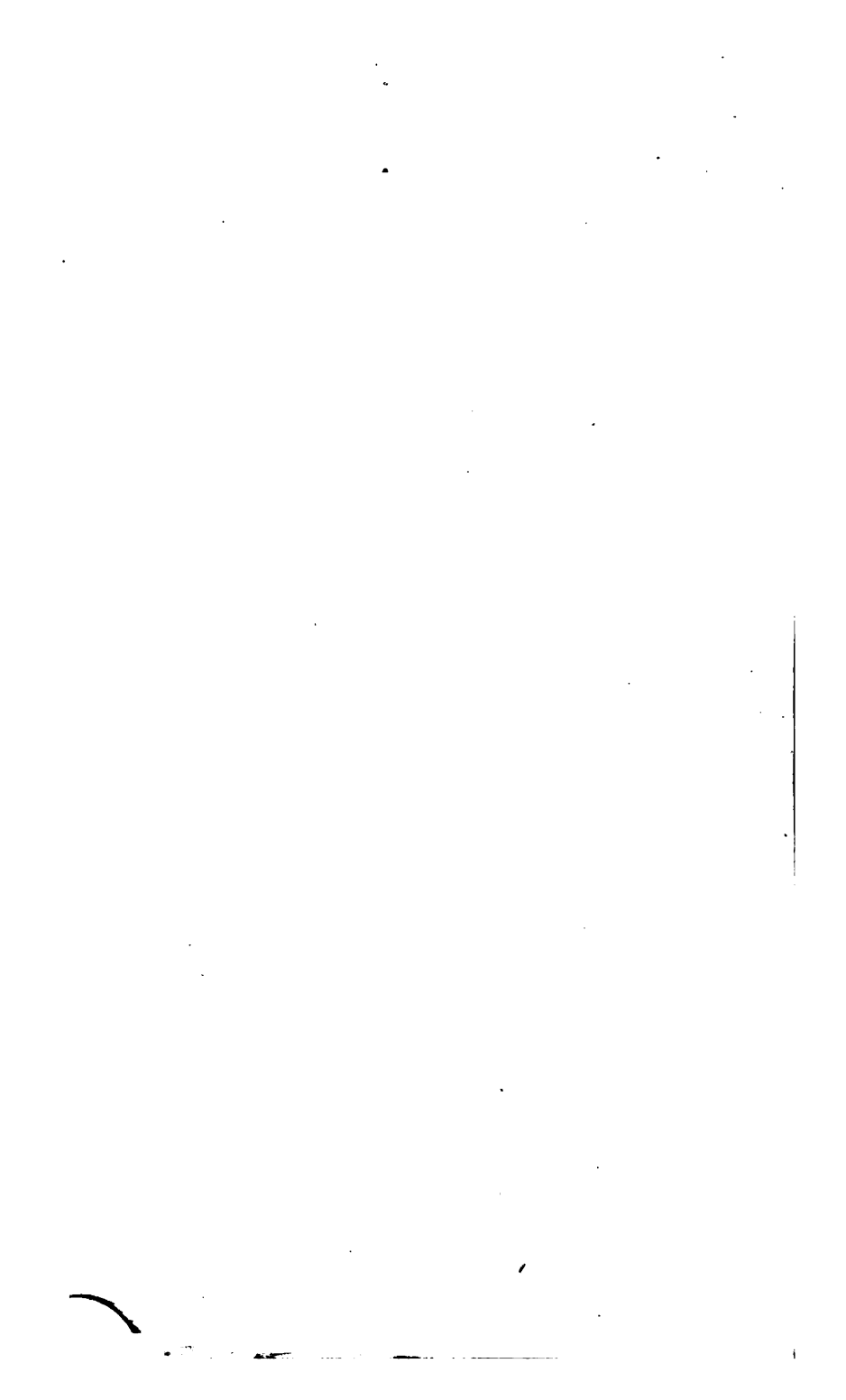
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